

THE

AGGRESSORS

HO CHI MINH,
NORTH VIETNAM &
THE COMMUNIST BLOC

Martin Scott Catino, Ph.D.

Copyright 2010 Martin Scott Catino

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to the countless millions of people who died resisting Communism and other extreme ideologies, and especially to the Vietnam veterans and other Americans and allies who served in diverse efforts fighting to prevent further bloodshed and to establish a more durable peace, struggling to build free societies for another generation, which carries the same mission.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to first and foremost acknowledge my lovely wife, Lisa, who never ceased to inspire, encourage, and support me as I worked on this project. Her gentle words and tireless efforts reading this manuscript are reminders of her love and dedication that began when I met her while I was in graduate school at the University of Southern Mississippi.

W.C. (Chuck) and Estela Dorn, my in-laws who are affectionately known as Dad and Tita, have likewise contributed much to this book. I appreciate all their help and encouragement. I thank them again for allowing me to study in Mobile, Alabama and for the many wonderful evenings and dinners that we shared. I thank them also for introducing me to the South Vietnamese community in their area and for facilitating my studies of the Cold War when I researched in the Philippines.

Robert and Stephanie Atha were also very helpful in the completion of this book. They kindly allowed me to use their home to study and to access regional libraries in Kansas, where I was able to access important sources not readily available elsewhere.

This book would not have been possible without the inspiration of hundreds of students scattered across the United States, China, Vietnam, the Philippines, and the Middle East, who also inspired me to write this book. Their thirst for freedom and truth, their desire to serve, and their earnest evaluation of life's victories and defeats moved me through the difficult moments inherent in any lengthy project of this type. I especially thank the students of the University of South Carolina-Aiken and its History Club for their comments and criticisms: Michelle, Martha, Shannon, Gerod, Kevin, Nikko, Jason, Gary, and Bill.

Having worked on this project for over six years now, I have had the privilege of meeting many Vietnam War Era veterans. Each one contributed in a special way, sharing their passions, victories, and pains. However, MAJ (Ret.) Melvyn Kloor of Sierra Vista, Arizona deserves a special place in this book. He not only shared his life and war experience with me but accompanied me to Iraq, where we served together in Operation Iraq Freedom (2009-2010). His life testified of the virtue, courage, and selflessness of many Vietnam veterans. Serving with Mel was one of the most honorable moments of my life. I have included a special chapter on his service at the end of the book.

I am also indebted to the many fine men and women that I served with in Iraq.

Furthermore, I am indebted to my graduate school History advisers at East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania and the University of Southern Mississippi, scholars who patiently provided the knowledge and advisement necessary for advanced studies in foreign policy and military history. I especially thank Dr. Geoffrey Jensen of Virginia Military Institute and Dr. Andrew Wiest of the University of Southern Mississippi, outstanding scholars who shared their expertise and insights while motivating me to further study and inquiry.

INTRODUCTION

The fact that the Vietnamese Communists and their allies were the aggressors in Indochina, and caused the war in Vietnam, is irrefutable. But another fact, perhaps more important, is that these extremists left a pattern of aggression that is modeled and studied today by other violent malcontents throughout the world. Notable groups such as Al Qaeda have looked to the Vietnam War as an example on “how to defeat America,” the West, and its allies. Knowing the motives, strategies, tactics, and ruses of the Vietnamese Communists therefore is essential for American policymakers, the military community, as well as ordinary Americans who sincerely seek to defend and to secure their country in the 21st century. Equally important for the watchful American is studying the failures to meet these challenges during the Vietnam War era.

Thus the target audience of *THE AGGRESSORS* is wide indeed. May this book fall into the hands of concerned Americans who are willing to look at history, learn from its lessons, and then with renewed conviction make a difference. But this learning experience can only come by overcoming the human penchant to turn away at the sight of aggression, allowing psychologically blindness, fear, and innocence to distort a proper understanding of the character, deeds, and traits of aggressors. As Americans face aggression candidly they are also facing candidly obstacles to their future, and thus move a step closer to securing a better future both locally and globally.

This study is presented also to a student audience, another generation facing the challenges of war thrust upon America by aggression at home and abroad. Through design and default, many of these young minds have not been exposed to the truths of the past, the lessons of the Cold War, and the doctrines of history that can best serve America’s national interests. If even a few young Americans learn the traits of these aggressors, their tactics, methods, and strategies, then this book has succeeded in its purpose.

But why publish another book on the Vietnam War when the market is saturated with such? The careful student of history will note that the emphasis of this book is upon the neglected early years of radical activities and Communist aggression in Indochina, 1920 to 1945. These years were certainly the most important for understanding why the United States fought in Vietnam. Far too many studies of the Vietnam War and the Cold War focus on the 1950s and afterward, failing to adequately study the foundational period of Ho Chi Minh’s movement or the designs of international Communism. By the 1950s, the Communist revolution in Indochina had matured into an advanced insurgency well practiced in bringing the resources, experiences, and support of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China to bear on the peoples of Indochina.

This study goes beyond the basics of many previous studies which rightly assert that the origins of the war in Vietnam can be found in North Vietnam’s aggression. The personality of Ho Chi Minh, who is among the most misunderstood major personalities in American military history, is central to the thesis of this book. Ho Chi Minh was not only “a hard core Communist” but far more sophisticated than other Communists in his abilities to hide his activities,

manipulate global sentiments, and lead a Leninist revolution with few resources at the beginning except for his immense intellect, dynamic personality, and adroit leadership skills. Rather than a frustrated nationalist seeking to liberate Vietnam from French colonialism, the truth of the matter was that Ho Chi Minh was a brutal radical who found Communism to be a powerful means and identity that fit well his fiery personality and ambitions. Ho Chi Minh did not support nationalism; he fought it and destroyed it at every opportunity. His personality, strategies, and actions are therefore not just important for understanding historical events in Vietnam but also for understanding the tactics of America's most successful and implacable foe.

The Communist challenge during the Cold War is indeed aptly summed by the early Cold War leaders in America, particularly President Harry S. Truman. The President rightly identified the Soviet Union as the main source of "Red Fascism," as Communism was sometimes called in the aftermath of WWII. The Communist Bloc's revolutionary methods relied primarily upon propaganda (and outright lies), co-opting nationalist movements, using border areas to plant revolutions in contiguous areas, and not least in importance, mass murder and totalitarian enslavement of entire populations. Therefore, these insights from the past must not be forgotten but studied in detail.

I make no claim of infallibility in this book. I attempted to lessen the chance of error by addressing major strategic issues and historical patterns rather than tactical and incidental matters, which are open to honest debate. Moreover, I do not support the notion that the United States was without fault during the period (or through its history). Human weakness, error, and avarice are a part of human nature and therefore American history, including the Vietnam War.

However, an important point of interpretation needs to be clarified: despite the mistakes of the United States throughout its Cold War years (for instance the example of Senator Joseph McCarthy) America stood not only as the viable alternative to world aggression but the only force strong enough to resist effectively global tyranny. This was not only America's past achievement but also its present state and mission. A failure to confront Communist aggression would have created outcomes far too tragic to contemplate comfortably. Let the examples of Mao Zedong's China or Pol Pot's Cambodia serve as accurate scenarios that could have easily been repeated in other areas--including the United States had it not deterred such aggression.

THE AGGRESSORS asserts another thematic point: Communism was far more dangerous to human life, individual freedom, and American security than the vilest dictatorships of the post-World War II era. Most tyrannies throughout modern history (as well as ancient history) subjugated conquered foes under oppressive policies but ceased mass killings after military victory and political control was achieved. Communists, imbued with fanatical and religious-like ideology, not only brutally killed their opponents during wars but unlike other militants in history continued or increased the high levels of killing after victory was achieved in order to obtain a Marxist utopia and not just domination--and that often inflicted not upon foreign enemies but their own people. After the threat of international Fascism was removed in World War II, international Communism stood alone as the main threat to global security and human life. The Communists themselves often fell prey to aggression within their own Party as "purges" cut deeply into the ranks of the "faithful" as well as society.

In sum, the oppression that followed a Marxist revolution sought not just compliance of the subjects but complete mental/ideological reform, a goal achieved through such draconian methods as torture and forced propaganda in concentration camps called “re-education camps.” Terror, intimidation, and punishment remain central features of Communist rule then and now.

Advocates of “human rights,” “peace,” and “nuclear freeze” during the Cold War/Vietnam War era were therefore placed in a difficult position ethically: to protest against American involvement in the Vietnam War was tantamount to allowing the mass murders of international Communism to continue under the direction of “nationalist liberations.” To protest against the “brutal dictatorship of South Vietnam” was likewise to allow the chief aggressor to prosper while blaming the victim rather than the victimizer. The philosophical dilemma has been erroneously resolved by denying the basic facts of Communism’s legacy, overlooking the clear record of Hanoi’s aggression, and distorting the history of American service personnel in Vietnam. What was absent from most criticisms of the Vietnam War is a candid attempt to maximize human rights and human dignity while opposing firmly Communist aggression.

Finally, I should include a word on the use of sources for *THE AGGRESSORS*. Perhaps no other time in the half century of the study of the Vietnam War has witnessed such poor scholarship based on erroneous assumptions about sources. Today, many of the most respected Vietnam War historians blindly follow the radical Left’s propaganda while refusing to peel away the rind of rhetoric beyond which one can find the immoral methods frequently condoned by these revolutionaries. Equally egregious in scholarship are those pundits who stand over Hanoi’s recently opened archives and claim to have found the best sources, which better reveal the facts about the Vietnam War. Acting like priests and priestesses of an ancient mystery religion, these scribes claim that their unique position is founded upon knowledge of the Vietnamese language and special access to Hanoi’s archives, a position that allows them to divine basic truths about the Vietnam War not available to others and to average Americans.

THE AGGRESSORS places emphasis not merely on the words of the Communist revolutionaries but rather on their actions. Therefore historical sources of Vietnamese Communism that reveal precedent, patterns of activity, doctrine, operational directives, or major speeches clarifying Party orientation, or statements that match actions witnessed by many groups, all constitute the critical determinants used in this study. The same character traits found in V.I. Lenin’s revolution can be found in Mao’s and Ho Chi Minh’s. These actions are not just clearly documented by opponents of Communism who wrote extensively about the facts but also by the Communist themselves, who now candidly admit (as they did in their previous writings) that they committed mass murder and used deception as chief methods of achieving victory and spreading their ideas.

The readers will therefore find a frequent use of Communist sources which document this fact and testify to aggressions born of ideological fanaticism and power grabbing made through sophisticated tactics and masterful propaganda deceptions. The reader should also understand that claims asserting that North Vietnam either *reacted* to American or South Vietnam’s “aggression,” or did not institute Communist mass killings that far exceeded any other death toll of the era, can chiefly be found in minds that justify aggressors who will not even try to justify themselves on those grounds. Communism was motivated as much by offensive ideology (rather

than defensive) as by the success achieved through effective methods that often empowered their revolutions to overcome emerging nations or regions too weak to resist.

Furthermore, the dismissive and cynical scholarship that has discarded government sources, presidential records and testimonies, and military accounts (both U.S., South Vietnamese, or allied) has no part in this study. While I used discretion with all sources, this study found the works of American Presidents and leaders to be highly useful in establishing many historical facts (not all) and refuting some of the very same criticisms made by recent studies of the war, which have reasserted notions long rejected as unsound by American leaders. What has passed for modern studies on the Cold War era has often been merely the resurrection of ideas that American Presidents, government officials, or others during the time had refuted successfully—ideas that could not hold water in the past (and thus cannot in the present).

Wherever possible, I tried to use and footnote sources from government documents that are easily found in local libraries or on the internet rather than sources more difficult to access, even though I used both. I did this to kindle an interest in honest investigation of these sources and the subject

I also included a variety of newly released primary sources and general studies of the period in order to accurately portray the Cold War context. The recently declassified Central Intelligence Agency documents, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* documents from the administration of President Richard Nixon, as well as other government sources were helpful. Mention should also be made of seminal studies or document collections on Communism and the Cold War. Such an example is Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives*. trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998).

What has been presented here undoubtedly falls short of the honor due to our Vietnam veterans and American citizens, as well as others who resisted Communism from either higher ideals or the desire just to survive. For no work or mere human words can capture the enormity of suffering and the depth of heroism that animated human spirits that rightly deserve the most honored place in history.

Scott Catino
14 February 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments.....	i
Introduction	ii
Chapter 1: Ho Chi Minh: “A Hard-Core Communist”	1
Chapter 2: “Of All the Woes on Earth”: The Roots of Communist Activities in Indochina	
Chapter 3: The Geneva Waltz and A Familiar Tune (The Geneva Conference of 1954).....	
Chapter 4: “Peaceful Activities”: North Vietnam’s Covert Invasion of the South, 1954-1961	
Chapter 5: Of Mud and Men: Geography and History as Beginnings	
Chapter 6: Poster Child: The Communist Victory in Vietnam	
Chapter 7: The Search for Beginnings. . . the Search for Endings	
Chapter 8: When Vietnam Veteran Melvyn Kloor Raised His Right Hand.....	
Endnotes	
Bibliography	

Chapter 1

Ho Chi Minh: “A Hard-Core Communist”



Ho Chi Minh

*Ho Chi Minh was, of course,
a hard-core Communist. . . .¹*

-President Dwight D. Eisenhower

Those who served in President Dwight Eisenhower’s administration or those many Vietnamese who sought a humane solution to the political problems of their beautiful land needed little clarification of “Ike’s” assessment of Ho Chi Minh. The nationalists who fought Ho Chi Minh found him to be a determined individual who followed the course of Leninism with shrewd calculation and skillful application.

CHRONOLOGY:

1860s: Arrival of the French in Indochina and colonization of Vietnam.

1890: Ho Chi Minh was born in Nghe An province in Vietnam.

1907-1911: Early years in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh participated in a revolt against French colonial rule and embraced radicalism.

1911: Ho Chi Minh set out to travel the world. He became involved in a variety of violent and radical groups which facilitated his acceptance of Communism later.

1914: Ho Chi Minh stayed in London and participated in labor protests. He may have been exposed to Marxist ideology there.

1917: Ho arrived in Paris and joined the French Socialist Party. He also formed a subversive group.

1919: Ho approached the Versailles conference at the end of World War II and sought political recognition. He was rejected.

1920: Ho embraced Communism and rapidly moved into leadership positions. He helped establish the French Communist Party.

1923: Ho began his study in Moscow, Russia as an agent of the Comintern.

1925-1930: Ho Chi Minh began his work as a Communist revolutionary in Southeast Asia.

But unlike President Eisenhower, many of Ho Chi Minh's enemies did not live to tell their stories in their memoirs. Many who did not return the smile of Vietnam's version of Joseph Stalin met their end under the careful orders of a North Vietnamese or Vietcong cadre who carried out with robotic obedience a well-planned and Communist-styled execution—executions forgotten by most people but not those who were intimately associated with the victims or those who took careful consideration of the legacy of “revolutionary violence” in Vietnam. Those acquaintances of Ho Chi Minh who survived his “reforms” often lived with the shameful reality that the “frail old man” who later led his Communist Vietnamese to victory had been far more deceptive than originally assumed.

Some prominent biographers of Ho have noted in their studies that his physical appearance itself was quite unassuming and yet charming in its simplicity and humility. Yet behind the gentle mannerisms of this revolutionary who resembled more a kind grandfather than a “hard-core Communist” stood an individual who outwitted some of the more prominent French, Japanese, Chinese, British, and American strategists, statesmen, and journalists.²

Bernard Fall, a highly visible journalist who wrote often about Ho Chi Minh, remarked that his personality was so likeable that little could be found in this man that could arouse opposition or suspicion. For surely, Fall argued, Ho did not have the bellicose personality of well-known Communist leaders like Joseph Stalin, Nikita Khrushchev or Mao Zedong-- individuals who gave obvious evidence of their murderous ideology and violent passions. That is, Fall further noted, unless this frail-looking Communist was simply acting, hiding his real motives and intentions, and putting on a front at every opportunity and public appearance.³

Unfortunately for the Vietnamese who placed their trust in him, Ho not only assumed the role of an actor but also wrote new chapters in the art of political theatrics. He was indeed “a

shrewd calculator, a consummate actor, a patient revolutionary, a ruthless agitator. Ho was a man of many personalities.”⁴

And unfortunately for modern history, most of the historical accounts of Ho’s life draw from this script rather than a careful study of his ideas, actions, and practices. According to many historians, Ho Chi Minh’s life was a mystery that has been darkened by a lack of knowledge of his behind-the-scenes activities and by the shadowy world of underground Communism.⁵ Subsequently, most biographical outlines of Ho’s life typically stumble through the darkness and depict this “hard-core Communist” not only falsely but also irrationally and inconsistently, giving little consideration of or emphasis on his historical context, political affinities, or actions. In a figurative sense, most modern accounts depict him as a swimmer who never got wet, a farmer who never got dirty; and a fireman who never smelled of smoke.

Unwittingly or otherwise, most modern historians portray Ho Chi Minh as a contradiction of his very own thoughts, deeds, and doctrines. Ho emerges from these accounts as a nationalist who supported and built Communist internationalism, an independent who worked tirelessly as a Communist agent of Moscow, a patriot who killed his own countrymen and fellow revolutionaries because they were not Communists, a pragmatist who never deviated from Communist policy or doctrine, and a revolutionary who fought for independence from an oppressive France, but who also happened to impose Communist tyranny over his own people. Thus the Ho Chi Minh of most modern historical presentations blooms like an artificial flower placed in the dirt of a Communist vase.

Ho would not have been upset at the “mystery” regarding his life; he embraced it and cultivated it as an essential aspect of his propaganda image. He stated on the matter of secrecy: “We must seek every means to keep secret all activities and in all circumstances: in an inn, in our

talks, and in our work, we must observe secrecy.”⁶ Indeed, Ho’s ability to remain “in character” and portray himself so benevolently not only fooled many but made him unique among Communist leaders, who could not match his ability to hide their violent streak or create such a harmless public image of themselves.

To simply reassert the notion that Ho Chi Minh was a “hard-core Communist” would be a beneficial undertaking that would certainly help fill a void created by overly sentimental or dogmatic historians who have distorted Ho’s image. But much more is at stake: Ho Chi Minh was not just a typical Communist leader. His role in the Vietnam War was unique.

Plainly stated, Ho Chi Minh created and shaped the parameters, conditions, and course of the Vietnam War more than any other individual. In essence, the Vietnam War was Ho Chi Minh’s war--a work of his ingenuity as much as his aggression. Pham Van Dong, one of Ho’s closest associates, remarked:

Ho Chi Minh was the man mapping out the line, deploying the forces, the organizer, the manager and the architect. He achieved extraordinary results from ordinary and simple deeds, concrete and practical ways of doing modest and firm first steps; small and simple forces at the start. Ho Chi Minh’s huge revolutionary work was developed according to a plan which was scientifically thought through and calculated as to both method and time, aim and results.⁷

A basic understanding of the development of Ho Chi Minh’s revolutionary character--the “hard core”--is therefore critical for understanding the Vietnam War. America’s war to contain Communist aggression in Vietnam cannot be understood without an adequate knowledge of Ho Chi Minh’s sympathies, proclivities, experiences, resolves, and ideology--his basic character evidenced in his “revolutionary work.” Ho Chi Minh’s development into a “hard-core” Communist revolutionary is indeed a fundamental story essential for unraveling the origins of the war in Vietnam.

“Nguyen Who Hates the French”



Ho Chi Minh

Ho Chi Minh, the Communist who emerged from the periphery of the industrial world, was born Nguyen Sinh Cung on May 19, 1890 in a village in Nghe An province (Central Vietnam)--a “hot bed” of revolutionary activity against the French.⁸ Ho was born into a Vietnamese world where French rule, though only recently established by that time, had intruded deeply into the lives of this mostly peasant society and marked its daily existence with much shame, harm, and economic exploitation. United States President Franklin Roosevelt noted that French rule “milked Vietnam” of its resources⁹--a milking that one could add drained the emotional vitality as well as the economic resources of the Vietnamese people.

Ho was typical of his generation in that he detested the French colonial yoke that had brought so much suffering to Vietnam but extreme in the degree that he would allow that antipathy to develop. Later, while living in Paris, France, he took the name of Nguyen O Phap, which means “Nguyen Who Hates the French.”¹⁰ *Hatred*—carefully crafted and concealed in his life--rather than sound reason and moderate thinking would dominate much of Ho’s life and would mark his revolutionary career.

The arrival of large numbers of Frenchmen in Indochina in the 1860s signaled the beginning of another epoch of foreign domination and suffering that affected not just Ho Chi Minh later in that century but nearly all of the Vietnamese people during that period. The forces that propelled French colonialism onto the world scene stemmed from a misapplication of the technological, economic, administrative (organizational), and military advances that characterized the rise of Western Europe from approximately A.D. 1500 to 1900—developments that created a European world set apart distinctly from “underdeveloped countries,” which quickly came under the influence or outright control of these colonial powers.¹¹

The imperial era was an epoch in world history that deserves much attention for the fact that Western Europe, formerly one of the more backward areas of the world, rose to the forefront of global affairs while surpassing other civilizations. Historian Karen Armstrong, in a discussion of the eclipse of Islamic states by the rise of Europe, noted succinctly many of the character traits of European ascendancy:

The rise of the West is unparalleled in world history. The countries north of the Alps had for centuries been regarded as a backward region. . . . By the twelfth and thirteenth centuries these western European countries had just about caught up with the other core cultures, and by the sixteenth century had begun a process of major transformation that would enable the West to dominate the rest of the world. . . . It had not been planned or thought out in advance, but had been the result of a complex process which had led to the creation of democratic, secular social structures. By the sixteenth century Europeans had achieved a scientific

revolution that gave them greater control over the environment than anybody had achieved before. There were new inventions in medicine, navigation, agriculture and industry. None of these was in itself decisive, but their cumulative effect was radical.¹²

Although small numbers of Spanish and Portuguese missionaries, along with Japanese traders, had preceded the arrival of the French, the events of the 1860s marked the beginning of a period in which Vietnam was totally subjugated and not merely contacted by outsiders. The ascendancy of Louis Napoleon III in France, the grandson of the great French revolutionary who conquered much of Europe, assured the outward expansion of that European power.

Seeking markets, raw materials, competition with the British who dominated the Far East, and imperial dreams, the glory-hungry Napoleon needed only a thin pretext to justify the colonization of Vietnam. Using the persecution of Christian missionaries by the Nguyen dynasty for that very reason, he undertook the colonization of Indochina throughout the 1860s with deliberation and over the objection of some of his advisors. Although French forces had a significant military advantage over the Vietnamese, and had conquered southern Vietnam by 1867, all of Vietnam would fall under French control only after 16 years of additional fighting.¹³

French colonization of Indochina soon demonstrated that it was an exploitive economic relationship between colonial master and subjugated native. Despite promises of economic improvement by the French, and some gains in this regard, imperial policies brought further hardship, hunger, oppression, and abuse--aggravating an already poor economic condition in Vietnam. Forced labor, abusive work conditions, low wages, land stealing, grinding taxes, debt enslavement, all these were far too common practices under French rule.¹⁴ Ho Chi Minh later made the subject of economic exploitation under French rule one of the most important propaganda themes for spreading Communism.¹⁵ One of Ho Chi Minh's associates wrote in a propaganda piece about French colonialism:

Injustice was everywhere, in each family as in society. Everywhere, one met with insults. Everywhere, one saw beggars. We had eyes but could not see, we had legs but could not change our horizon. Oppression was unbearable to all those who had a conscience. Those people who did not know the real cause of their misery sought comfort in prayers or cursed their fate.¹⁶

Moreover, notions of racial and cultural superiority among the French intertwined with their economic ambitions and exacerbated the subjugation of Vietnam under French power.

French imperialists asserted their “racial and cultural superiority” without reservation or apology.

Jules Ferry, the famous French imperialist and premier from 1880-1881 and 1883-1885, declared before the French National Assembly regarding the subject of Indochina:

Gentlemen, we must speak more loudly and more honestly! We must say openly that indeed the higher races have a right over the lower races. . . . I repeat that the superior races have a right because they have a duty. They have the duty to civilize the inferior races. . . . In the history of earlier centuries these duties, gentlemen, have often been misunderstood; and certainly when the Spanish soldiers and explorers introduced slavery into Central America, they did not fulfill their duty as men of a higher race. . . . But, in our time, I maintain that European nations acquit themselves with generosity, with grandeur, and with sincerity of this superior civilizing duty.¹⁷

Ferry concluded his strident message justifying imperialism with a burst of determination for the defense of France’s colonial possessions: “[We] will never leave them!” These words vividly foreshadowed the further troubles that awaited the Vietnamese people.





French troops in Indochina, 1888

Although the economic exploitation and the brutal policies which enforced these actions created resentment among the Vietnamese people toward the French, the Vietnamese of Ho's era detested the racial humiliation placed upon the proud descendants of the Viet as much as any problem associated with French colonialism—and possibly more. Many Vietnamese harbored a deep hatred for the French because they stigmatized the Vietnamese, considering them to be “an inferior race” that needed tutelage from the French.

Racial humiliation permeated nearly every aspect of French imperial policy, evidenced in the laws and the social values that pervaded life during French rule of Indochina.¹⁸ A Vietcong who reflected upon his conflict with the French during his youth noted in his memoirs:

The scene of my initiation into the mysteries of colonialism was the *lycee* schoolyard during recess. As the games we played became rougher and more competitive, my Vietnamese friends and I learned that we, in contrast to our French schoolmates, were part of a racial entity sometimes called *nhaques* (peasants), sometimes *mites* (a derogatory abbreviation of *Annamite*, the French term for Vietnamese). Completely unprepared for attacks of this kind on my *amor proper*, I was first shocked by the insults. Soon shock gave way to anger, and recesses were occasionally punctuated with brawls, which mirrored the hatreds felt by many of our elders. But given the thick protective armor that still encased me, I had no way of knowing about any of that. Nor, as I began to feel the stirrings of my Vietnamese identity, was I in the least aware of how the French had come to master Vietnam or of the history of Vietnam's dealing with previous masters.¹⁹

The situation in Laos, likewise under French colonialism, differed little from its sister colony in Vietnam. Maj. Gen. Oudone Sananikone of the Royal Lao Army also reflected on his experiences as a student who witnessed the institutionalized arrogance of the ruling French elite:

As a student in the French high school in Vientiane I learned about the French devotion to 'liberte,' 'egalite,' and 'fraternite' but observed that this honorable tradition did not apply outside the school room. For example, as in the rest of Indochina, the common means of transportation on the streets of Vientiane was the pedicab, a three-wheeled cycle; in the Vientiane version, the passenger sat on an open seat beside the driver. It somehow exceeded the French sense of 'liberte' for a Lao to sit comfortably with legs crossed while being pedaled across town—this relaxed posture was reserved for the French—and this offense would bring a clout on the head from the French gendarme. Inevitably, French oppression fostered dissidence and I joined many of my fellow students in a movement, which was later to become known as Lao Issara (Free Laos), whose ultimate goal was the restoration of self-government in our country.²⁰

Ho Chi Minh was undoubtedly one of these many victims of French economic and racial policies—a victim who later became a victimizer. During his youth, Ho Chi Minh's detestation of French imperialism led him to write often about the evils of that system. Certainly his own words show vividly this victimization that he and others deeply felt:

You all have known that French imperialism entered Indochina half a century ago. In its selfish interests, it conquered our country with bayonets. Since then we have not only been oppressed and exploited shamelessly, but also tortured and poisoned pitilessly. Plainly speaking, we have been poisoned with opium, alcohol, etc. I cannot, in some minutes, reveal all the atrocities that the predatory capitalists have inflicted on Indochina. . . .²¹

Fall noted correctly on Ho's early life: "His early writings also clearly reflect the personal humiliations he must have suffered at the hands of the colonial masters—not because they hated him as a person, but simply because, as a 'colored' colonial, *he did not count as a human being.*"²²

During Ho's early life under French rule the pains and scars of oppression accumulated and formed a "cool burning" or managed rage that later found an immediate and gratifying palliative in the violent revolutionary movement of Communism, which justified retribution and killing under the cloak of sophisticated political language and doctrine. Ho Chi Minh's early years also demonstrated clearly that he mishandled these personal pains and injuries suffered under French colonial rule--losing his own humanity in this "spiritual struggle" with imperialism--and that he pushed aside non-violent and sensible options for reform. Ho reacted rashly and violently to French oppression and did so repeatedly in his youth. He rejected vehemently all forms of gradual emancipation from the French, or reform movements that cooperated with the West (France or the United States).

His lack of character, temperance, and concern for the consequences of his revolutionary activities placed him on a path to later accept the inhumane and expedient policies that Communism offered to "colonial peoples" who wished to fight against Western imperialism. His early years gave evidence that his eventual acceptance of Communism was natural, given his personality traits, and not a major step that was out of character with his formative years.

In the fall of 1907 Ho Chi Minh began his early career as a youth who trained for a career in government service at the prestigious National Academy at Hue. Although a proficient student with extraordinary intelligence and discipline, the young Ho found no affinity with the elites and reformists who worked within the French system rather than revolting against it. While yet a teenager, the future leader of Vietnam had worked underground against the French authorities, “and had served as a messenger for scholar patriots.”²³ On one occasion, Ho even struck a student who harassed him because of his rural accent.²⁴

But it was not Ho’s lack of cultural refinement that caused his removal from the school but rather his revolutionary sentiments. On May 9, 1908 Ho joined a peasant revolt that directly challenged French officials and their “nervous troops” who withstood the crowd. The young revolutionary not only suffered the rebuff and injuries of police batons after rushing to the front of the crowd of peasants but also the prompt removal from the academy the very next day. “I have orders to request that this troublemaker be dismissed from school”²⁵ a French police official sternly announced during Ho’s expulsion.

Undeterred by the failure of the revolt, the rash young Ho escaped by moving south and further studying the political situation of colonial Vietnam. Given the opportunity to join with Phan Chu Trinh, a reformist who led a group of nationalists seeking independence from France mainly by political means, Ho rejected the man and his approach as naive.²⁶

Although still a young man, and not yet embracing a systematic revolutionary ideology or clearly finding an organizational affiliation, Ho Chi Minh nevertheless had decided on the *means* of his political programs: revolutionary violence. His vehemence toward French colonialism allowed no possible accommodation of that political system. These anti-French feelings festered within and created a drive for an illusory freedom that had to satisfy the fiery pangs of a psyche

which could not conceive of victory without violence, and peace without political upheaval. Ho, moved by these restless emotions that demanded answers, turned away from the powerlessness of the Vietnam of his mind and birth and gravitated to the bigger world whose grand image alone stood much larger than the French colonial system that had created his angst.

Subsequently, the young extremist then continued his quest for political empowerment by exporting his revolutionary activities abroad while seeking to understand the strength of his enemy, the West.²⁷ In 1911 Ho Chi Minh decided to leave Vietnam and travel the world. Working as a mess boy on a French liner, and later at other jobs, he traveled to various places including New York, Boston, London, and Paris.²⁸ These journeys reveal that one of Vietnam's ex-patriots found not an expanded world view that travel and "new horizons" often bring²⁹ but rather a narrow world in which like-minded political travelers groped for solutions limited by their biased choices and personal detestation of moderation.

Some Western scholars have suggested that Ho Chi Minh's travels abroad influenced his revolutionary ideology because of the fact that he witnessed the sufferings of colonial and minority peoples throughout the imperial world and the systemic problems of that system—a position that Communist sources posited often in their propaganda works.³⁰ But instead of accepting the progress that free societies offered, and shunning the inhumanity that radicalism contrived and executed, the determined young extremist continued to walk the path of shortsighted violence, expediency, and immediate gratification, seeking solutions among the many radical organizations of the era.

Although the radicals of Ho's era differed in name—anarchists, syndicalists, Marxists, revolutionary socialists, etc.—and differed on opinions about ideal forms of government, all these groups believed without exception that violence was the essential means for achieving the

preferred ends--the destruction of the West and its capitalist system. For instance, in 1883 "the American Federation of the International Working People's Association" asserted at their founding meeting: "This system is unjust, insane, and murderous. It is therefore necessary to totally destroy it with and by all means, and with the greatest energy on the part of everyone who suffers by it, and who does not want to be made culpable for its continued existence by his inactivity."³¹

These radicals likewise demonstrated "the spirit of envy, hatred, and malice" in their work, Winston Churchill--the great British Prime Minister and statesman--declared in 1908, as he expressed the sentiments of many.³² Moreover, these "works of malice" drew public attention to the temperament of these "reformers" as popular opinion often exposed the fact these malcontents were merely criminals or marginal elements of the populace which reveled in the chaos and disorder that their parties advocated and created.³³ Manipulating real social and economic problems, these extremists exploited the misery and pain of the era for their own ends and misguided political visions while refusing to partake of the progress that many dedicated politicians and reformers had achieved and had tirelessly pursued during the era.

United States President Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt understood clearly the pernicious nature of extremists, the need to fight them, and the harm created by those who minimized their danger. In 1901 Roosevelt summed up the matter well in his State of the Union Message as he addressed the problems of one such group, the anarchists:

The anarchist is a criminal whose perverted instincts lead him to prefer confusion and chaos to the most beneficent form of social order. His protest of the concern for workingmen is outrageous in its impudent falsity; for if the political institutions of this country do not afford opportunity to every honest and intelligent son of toil then the door of hope is forever closed against him. The anarchist is everywhere not merely the enemy of system and progress, but the deadly foe of liberty. If ever anarchy is triumphant, its triumph will last for but one red moment, to be succeeded for ages by the gloomy night of despotism. For

the anarchist himself, whether he preaches or practice his doctrine, we need not have one particle more concern than for any ordinary murderer. He is not the victim of social or political injustice. There are no wrongs to remedy in his case. The cause of his criminality is to be found in his own evil passions and in the evil conduct of those who urge him on, not in any failure by others or by the state to do justice to him or his. He is a malefactor and nothing else.³⁴

Ho Chi Minh entered this world of radicalism without major criticism or complaint, finding a natural affinity with the character and methods of these groups. Although he traveled to many port cities on the French liner, his trips to the United States, Great Britain and France were noteworthy. While in the United States he attended the meetings of the Universal Negro Improvement Trust in Harlem, an organization founded by Marcus Garvey and that advocated that blacks leave the United States and return to Africa.³⁵ Ho left the United States, refusing to look beyond his own personal experiences there, and believed that the States could not offer colonial peoples any help because of its “racist” sentiments.³⁶ He then set out for Great Britain.

By 1914 he moved to London and found that World War I had arrived in Europe. The bloody battle fields of Western civilization paralleled its economic and social conflicts at home, which tore the fabric of society as forcefully as bullets tore the uniforms of the fallen brave of that war. While in London Town Ho entered the political fray and embraced radical organizations, secret societies, and labor protests—a world far darker than the industrial-sooted skies and foggy nights under which they gathered. He supported energetically the Overseas Worker’s Association, a secret organization of mostly overseas Chinese laborers committed to improved working conditions in British factories.³⁷ Some scholars also noted that in that city Ho became acquainted with the writings of Karl Marx, the founder of Communism.³⁸ Although Ho had supported earnestly the aforesaid groups, he had not yet found the revolutionary supporters who could transform his dreams into realities.

But Paris would become the city where Ho's journey would change markedly and would bring some of the early successes--politically, organizationally, and socially--that later propelled him into leadership of the Communist revolution in Southeast Asia. In late 1917, following the stay in London, the young revolutionary moved to Paris, France and immediately joined several radical organizations there—a practice that had become habitual by then. In addition to involvement in labor activities, Ho joined the French Socialist Party and became active at its local meetings. He also joined an organization called the Club du Faubourg, “which addressed a wide variety of subjects, from radical politics to psychology and the occult.”³⁹ Ho's passionate disdain of French colonial policies attracted the attention of the French secret police who followed him almost everywhere, causing the young dissident to carefully plot his everyday moves and activities. He also attracted the attention of French extremists and the overseas Vietnamese community who admired his determination and passion.

By this time Ho was certainly not just a “fellow-traveler,” a mere associate or observer of these revolutionaries. Rather, he had participated in their activities and had engaged again in heated debates and arguments with those who opposed violent revolutionary methods.⁴⁰ The “militants” that he had associated with in his early political journey, so often described by historians with just benign terms such as “political groups,” had become mirror images of their wandering Vietnamese colleague whose aggression served the base and violent instincts commonly shared by those who had spurned the difficult and peaceful path of reform.⁴¹

The reader should take careful note of this last point about Ho Chi Minh's life, for it again reveals his early antipathy toward moderate political means. Though not yet a “Communist,” he had certainly furthered his resolve against moderate political methods indicative in his forceful arguments against non-violent action. Far from a youth who floated

adrift among the various political currents of the age, his political participation narrowed to venues that allowed him to released his violent temperament into actions that brought shallow justifications for striking at a system that had marred his past as well as his spirit.

Furthermore, during the summer of 1919 the wily Ho began to show his penchant for using deceptive front groups when he founded in France a “patriotic” organization called “the Association of Annamite Patriots,” which aimed at gaining the support of the overseas Vietnamese community in France—an important support base for spreading revolution to Vietnam. Instead of presenting a forthright or frank platform of his revolutionary ideology and basic beliefs, Ho disguised the group as a patriotic organization. William Duiker remarks in *Ho Chi Minh; A Life*:

On the surface, the association did not espouse radical objectives. Indeed, the founders hoped to avoid such an orientation in order to win broad support within the Vietnamese community and to avoid suspicion by the authorities. The adoption of the word “Annam” instead of the traditional “Vietnam” into the title was probably a signal to the government that it did not represent a serious danger to the colonial enterprise.⁴²

Ho’s concealment tactic would not be the last of his revolutionary career. Afterward, he used this approach on numerous occasions to deceive the French and Americans, among others, while seeking political advantages during an opportunistic moment in time. The use of “front groups” became a hallmark of his political engineering.⁴³

Truly his duplicity knew no bounds. In 1921 Ho formed in France the Intercolonial Union, which posed as a nationalist, independence organization but upheld Communism as the real agenda.⁴⁴ On another occasion he disguised himself as a Buddhist monk in order to proselytize in Bangkok, Thailand.⁴⁵ On yet other occasions, when challenged by the opposition, he openly denied that he was a Communist even though at the same time he demanded fidelity to that cause among his lieutenants—a tactic that Mao had used to seize power and deceive the

West.⁴⁶ In fact, when questioned by French authorities in 1946 on whether he was indeed Nguyen Ai Quoc, the name he had used often while in France and at the time, Ho Chi Minh denied it and answered they should look elsewhere for that man.⁴⁷

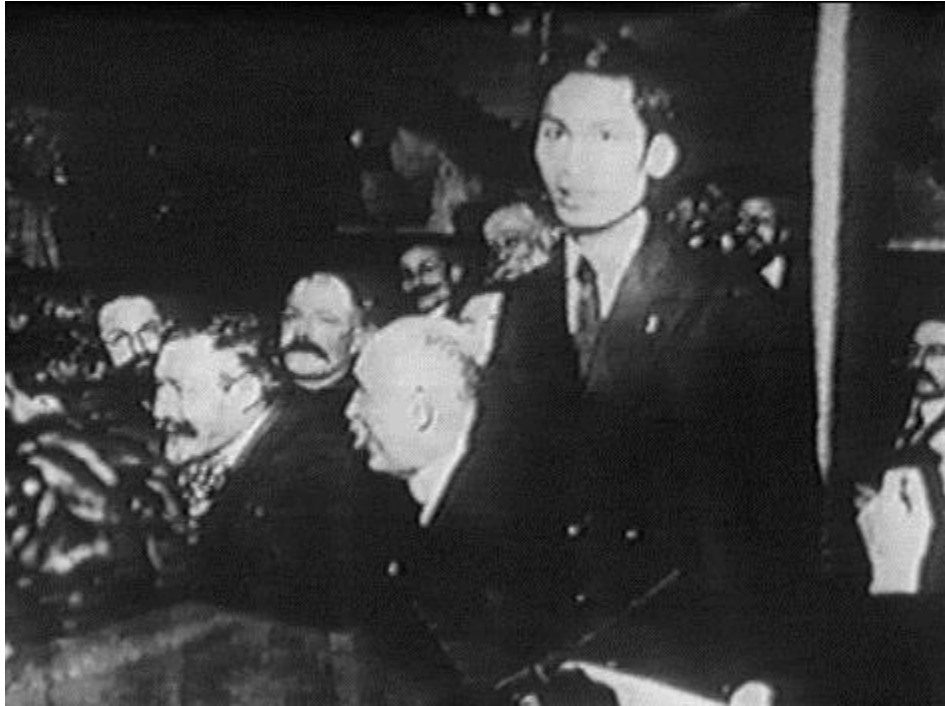
While some historians applaud this chicanery in his character trait as necessary for political survival,⁴⁸ students of history should keep in mind that Ho Chi Minh's trickery did not just target the authorities who sought his capture or death but also the public (masses) which often trusted in his feigned appearances and promises of freedom.⁴⁹

But Paris was alive with yet other opportunities for political deception. In 1919, World War I had ended and the victors met at Versailles, France to discuss peace treaties and to create the conditions of stability and restitution. Ho availed himself of the situation and approached the conference with the intent of seizing the opportunity to win political concessions for Vietnam according to his political agenda.⁵⁰

Ho approached the Western diplomats at the conference in a rented suite while bringing a simple request that they uphold the notion of "self determination," which had been a central political point of United States President Woodrow Wilson regarding the settlement of postwar nations and recognizing their independence as a critical component of building world peace. His petition, called the "Demands of the Annamite People," was moderate in political tone and shorn of radical ideology.

Ho Chi Minh, in addition to Chinese and Japanese officials who sought declarations of racial and political equality from Versailles, found the French and British to be terse in their refusal to recognize legitimate demands from Asian peoples. Although Ho received replies from the United States and others, he was rebuffed in his request for political rights for Vietnam. Historians have commented that this incident was pivotal to the development of Ho's character

and particularly his reason for embracing Communism.⁵¹ But a far more natural interpretation should note that he had already embraced radical ideology before the incident rather than after.



Ho Chi Minh at Versailles

Yet, there is no doubt that Ho Chi Minh was rebuked and even humiliated at Versailles. But the pivotal question remains: was this sufficient reason to justify the embracement of a political movement that incorporated systematic murder of innocent people? The many Southeast Asian leaders who found it difficult at times to deal with the United States, France, and Great Britain are the best examples of how a moderate, patient, and humane response to individual insult and difficult political choices should be approached.

The examples of Ramon Magsaysay (Philippines), Syngman Rhee (South Korea), Lee Kuan Yew (Singapore), and Nguyen Van Thieu (South Vietnam) are relevant. Each of these leaders had legitimate complaints about individual aspects of their relations with the United

States or the West but chose to keep these problems in perspective and subordinate to far more important issues such as national security, protection of human life, economic progress, individual freedom, and cultural integrity.

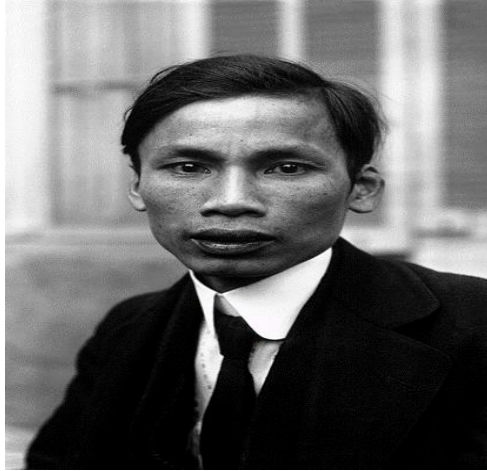
But another consideration is critical to an accurate historical evaluation of Ho Chi Minh. How serious was he about political freedoms for Vietnam? Well acquainted with radical ideology at the time, and certainly supporting it by evidence of his activities, further study of the event indicates that he again used the moment as an opportunity to manipulate the political circumstances toward his ends and gain the recognition and power that he craved. In addition to the basic human rights that Ho's document called for, it advocated political rights and freedoms such as freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of movement.⁵²

Why would Ho advocate these freedoms that his radical associates denounced at the time and that he fought tenaciously against shortly thereafter?⁵³ Many experts on Communism and other subversive groups have noted that these radicals during the period and thereafter championed popular rights in order to gain an opportunity to organize and to build their revolutionary structures--a tactic that later allowed these groups to become strong enough to destroy these very rights that allowed the rise of these "revolutionaries."⁵⁴ Moreover, should students of history believe that radicals supported the freedom of religion, one of the chief subjects of their contempt?

The Victim Becomes a Victimizer

In the summer of 1920 during Ho Chi Minh's stay in Paris, the young and zealous Vietnamese extremist concluded his years of searching for political power by making the critical decision to embrace Communism and to continue to repudiate non-violent forms of political opposition to French imperialism. He never wavered from that resolve and loyally followed the Communist line to the very end of his life. Ho's "conversion" to Communism was extraordinary in what it revealed about his character as well as his political sympathies. From the moment he "picked up the Hammer and Sickle" his labor for that cause demonstrated a "steeled" resolve to promote this new ideology throughout Vietnam and Indochina. The event, the step into the Communist world, was one that Ho frequently discussed among his followers, who looked to that moment in Ho's life with reverence, considering it a model of devotion to the Communist cause.⁵⁵

Ho embraced the Communist message at first without much thought or understanding. Instead, the success of Lenin's Bolshevik victory, the seizure of power in Russia by the Communists in 1919, appealed to Ho's desire for political empowerment--soothing the inner feelings of a distant revolutionary as if he were a connoisseur of fine music listening to Peter Tchaikovsky's opera for the first time. He remarked, "At that time, I supported the October Revolution only instinctively, not yet grasping all its historic importance. I loved and admired Lenin because he was a great patriot who liberated his compatriots; until then, I had read none of his books. . . . But I understood neither what was a party, a trade union, nor what was Socialism or Communism."⁵⁶



Ho Chi Minh, 1921

Ho found the brutal and aggressive policies of Lenin to be an effective and powerful means for a minority political faction to overthrow a ruling power--and then to dominate a country. The success of that Russian dictator's revolution enticed Ho Chi Minh with its boastful hoisting of Bolshevik bayonets that seemed to reach a height far above the lowly memories created by bitter feelings of the many failed revolutions of the Vietnamese, an experience that Ho knew first hand as well as through a deep affinity with the collective memories of his country's past. The failure of Vietnamese nationalist revolutions during the French occupation of Vietnam surfaced commonly in his writings throughout his life, used as potent justifications for the viability of the Communist system and the necessity of its leadership. Far more than just historical fact in Ho's memory, these failures obsessed the dynamic revolutionary and spurred his drive for revolutionary power.⁵⁷

Ho's "instinctive" support of the Communist revolution in Russia was a typical experience for many extremists in the era. During the early years of Communism, the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Marxists cared little for any other goal than the immediate destruction of the ruling elites. Early Communist literature showed little concern for constructive social

programs. George F. Kennan, one of the most prominent authorities on the subject of Soviet Communism, remarked about these early activities of the Bolsheviks: “Beyond the nationalization of industry and the expropriation of large private capital holdings there was no agreed program.”⁵⁸

Like other young radicals, Ho reached not for principled, inclusive, or compassionate solutions to the pressing problems of French colonialism but rather for raw power and for retribution, aims and actions that had become part and parcel of Communist policy. Kennan elaborated on this development in the early history of Communism:

. . . these revolutionists found in Marxist theory a highly convenient rationalization for their own instinctive desires. It afforded pseudo-scientific justification for their impatience, for their categorical denial of all value in the tsarist system, for their yearning for power and revenge and for their inclination to cut corners in the pursuit of it. It is therefore no wonder that they had come to believe implicitly in the truth and soundness of the Marxian-Leninist teaching, so congenial to their own impulses and emotions.⁵⁹

Furthermore, Ho Chi Minh embraced Communism in part because he was zealously courted by the Marxist world. Marxism-Leninism held the notion of internationalism, the importance of incorporating the “oppressed peoples of the world” into revolutionary socialism. The courting of colonial peoples included social and financial benefits--and later military support--that many politically alienated peoples found hard to resist. The young Vietnamese dissident found this attention appealing and remarked that “the reason for my joining the French Socialist Party was that these ‘ladies and gentlemen’--as I called my comrades at that moment--had shown their sympathy toward me, toward the struggle of the oppressed peoples.”⁶⁰

Ho Chi Minh’s acceptance of Communism also demonstrated the amoral emotionalism typical of radicals during the era. Ho was overwhelmed with emotion as he read and embraced Lenin’s works. In 1960, he wrote in “The Path Which Lead Me To Leninism”: “What emotion,

enthusiasm, clear-sightedness, and confidence it instilled in me. I was overjoyed to tears.

Though sitting alone in my room, I shouted aloud as if addressing large crowds: ‘Dear martyrs, compatriots! This is what we need, this is the path to our liberation!’⁶¹ Pham Van Dong recorded in his book *Ho Chi Minh: A Man, A Nation, An Age, and A Cause* that “In 1920, after days spent reading Lenin’s *Theses on the National and Colonial Question*, Ho Chi Minh cried with joy as if he had found a way out of darkness.”⁶²

But these emotions brought no deeper reflections on the realities of the Communist world and only began a long life of blind and misguided commitment to Marxist ideology and practice. Notably absent from Ho’s writings is a scrutiny of Communist practice, a genuine acknowledgment and redress, a problem made more evident by the utopic language used to cover over atrocities commonly occurring in the Communist movement—an obvious silence from a leader who tried to silence the voice of the oppressed. Ho’s tears shed in joy later brought tears to many Vietnamese who cried not in joy but in pain under the Communist boot.

Ho Chi Minh’s experiences and recollections during this time are important for chronicling his character development and particularly the amoral traits of his personality. Rather than illustrating insights into the problems and dynamics of the capitalist world, Ho’s life demonstrated a ready acceptance and embracement of the cruelty, brutality, and criminality that characterized the Communist movement and Soviet activities. Ho’s hatred of the French, and by extension the capitalist world, became evident by his fixation on Western imperialism and subsequently his support of and numbness to the destructiveness of a far greater menace known as Lenin’s Communism, which ripped through Russia and reverberated through the European world, bringing previously unimaginable degrees of human suffering and misery to the world.

The reader may find this description of Communism to be extreme and exaggerated, for “could it really be that bad?” For those who lived through the period and witnessed the rise of “Bolshevism,” as Communism was called in its early days, the degree of violence and brutality left little doubt that Communism had brought to the world a form of terror that previously had not been evident. Winston Churchill noted this fact in a speech during the early years of Lenin and his Reds:

Of all tyrannies in history the Bolshevik tyranny is the worst, the most destructive, and the most degrading. It is sheer humbug to pretend that it is not far worse than German militarism. The miseries of the Russian people under the Bolsheviks far surpass anything they suffered even under the Tsar. The atrocities by Lenin and Trotsky are incomparably more hideous, on a larger scale, and more numerous than any for which the Kaiser himself is responsible.⁶³

Far more than Prime Minister Churchill understood the mass killings undertaken by Lenin and his “Soviets.” Lenin’s agricultural “reforms” called for all non-conformists like the Kulaks to be “mercilessly suppressed,” as he said. In 1918 the Soviet revolutionary ordered: “Hang (hang without fail, so the people see) no fewer than one hundred known kulaks, rich men, blood suckers.”⁶⁴ Lenin’s followers carried out these policies with a predatory zeal that only the reprobate could condone. For example, the same year the Nolim Soviet ordered mass terror against the Cossacks and urged: “Institute a wholesale terror against the wealthy Cossack and peasants, and having destroyed them altogether, carry out a pitiless mass terror against the Cossacks in general who took any direct or indirect part in the fight against the Soviet government.”⁶⁵

The death of V.I. Lenin in 1924 did not arrest the horrible atrocities that Communism brought to Soviet Russia. The rise of Joseph Stalin to leadership of the Soviet Union following Lenin’s death added fresh horrors to an already nightmare-like scenario created by the intentional “purging” of the Russian population; the outright imperialism of Soviet Russia; the

totalitarian control of economies, lives, and thoughts; and acts of genocide committed on the Ukrainian and Kazak peoples and others.

The wanton destruction of human life by the Soviets, done in the name of progress and reform, can hardly be exaggerated. Seemingly endless acts of terror emerged under different names during the era of Lenin and Stalin—Red Terror, War Communism, Civil War, Agrarian Collectivization, and the Great Purge—all taking the lives of countless millions. Soviet leaders like Mikhail Kedrov slaughtered school children and army officers so ruthlessly that he had to be hospitalized for psychiatric reasons.⁶⁶ Soviet policy relied upon mass murder, social isolation in concentration camps (gulags), and mass terror—killing all who dissented or who were no use to the Communist Party. Latvian Communist Martins Lacis, who worked with the Soviet Cheka, described his role and that of the Cheka:

The first question you must ask is: what class does he belong to, what education, upbringing, origin, or profession does he have? These questions must determine the accused's fate. This is the sense and essence of red terror. . . . It doesn't judge the enemy, it strikes him. It shows no mercy, but incinerates anyone who takes up arms on the other side of the barricades and who is of no use to us But it isn't a guillotine cutting off heads at a tribunal's instance. . . . We, like the Israelite's, have to build the Kingdom of the Future under constant fear of the enemy's attack.⁶⁷

While it is beyond the scope and limited space of this chapter to detail the terror and cruelty instituted by Soviet Communism, sufficient for the moment is the fact that much of the civilized world heard of these atrocities and became alienated from these political philosophies simply from revulsion to the bloodshed and to the destructive outcomes. Many of the people of the most oppressed colonial areas of the world, including Vietnam, found Communism during this time to be a repulsive ideology, even when compared to colonialism, and sought other political means of independence. Ho Chi Minh was well aware of this fact.⁶⁸

Those who were closest to Communist activities often turned away from these practices after witnessing the loss of human life that routinely followed Communist takeovers and revolutions. Ngo Dinh Diem, the first president of South Vietnam, witnessed the brutality of Ho Chi Minh and his “nationalist” Vietminh, which had resisted French imperialism in Indochina during the post-WWII era. Diem, like many others, found that behind the cloak of popular notions of independence and economic improvement lurked the totalitarian and murderous ideology of Marxism-Leninism.⁶⁹

Stanley Karnow’s *Vietnam: A History* recorded an interesting interaction between Diem and Ho at a later time. The conversation underscored the inhumanity of Ho’s activities, but in a larger sense, the dialogue reflected a major difference between Vietnamese nationalism and the Communist movement. After Diem had been captured by the Vietminh in 1945 and had been taken to Ho, the future leader of South Vietnam remained adamant in his rejection of Communism. Diem called Ho “a criminal who has burned and destroyed the country,” and added that he had killed and betrayed hundreds including Diem’s own brother, who had been executed by the Vietminh. Defying the tacit understanding that Ho held the captured Diem’s life in the balance, he proclaimed yet again: “You speak a language without conscience. I work for the good of the nation, but I cannot be influenced by pressure. I am a free man. I shall always be a free man. Look me in the face. Am I a man who fears oppression or death?”⁷⁰

Diem like many others clearly understood that Communist doctrine was indeed “a language without conscience” in that it systematically instituted and justified an unparalleled killing of innocent people. In regard to betrayals, the Marxist revolutionaries had made an art of using sincere or misguided nationalists or victims of French colonialism for Communist ends, discarding their lives or service after those ends had been met. In contrast, all other political

systems—whether French, American, or Vietnamese nationalist—were incomparable, a far better alternative. And perhaps more importantly, after Communist leaders had achieved their victories, unlike other brutal systems, “the revolutionary violence” continued at high levels even during peace time in order to recreate society under the misguided dream of creating a Marxist utopia—Soviet, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Cambodian Communists all followed this model.⁷¹

Those who had gone far deeper into the Communist experience likewise detailed their disdain of that movement and wrote chilling narratives of acts of political murder carried out in cold and calculated ideological blindness and callousness. For example, Lev Koplev, a militant Soviet who participated in the collectivization campaign against the Kulaks (Russian farmers) during the early 1930s, witnessed the brutality that he and other Soviet Communists had committed under the guise of nationalism:

But these were all smokescreens, behind which a sharp turn was taken in state politics and ideology.

The mass arrests of ‘enemies of the people’ were already under way. The prisons of all cities were full to overflowing. The enormous expanses of the tundra and the tundras were the property of the secret empire of GULAG—two to four times as spacious as the entire area of Europe.

Starvation, massacre, torture, execution by decree of judges in absentia, became an everyday occurrence. As were the crowds of miserable, tearful women standing by the prison gates, at the inquiry offices of the NKVD.⁷²

Rather than acknowledging these character defects of Communism during the World War I era and afterwards, defects that were well-known to the civilized world, Ho chose instead to dismiss coldly and completely the obvious and to concentrate on the lesser problems of Western capitalism, exaggerating these smaller issues into much larger ones. Ho was driven by his hatred of French colonialism and immoderate personality to fixate on personal experiences, drastic

measures, and immediate solutions, no matter how illogical and dangerous these solutions became. When evaluating the sheer number of deaths, the abridgment of rights, and the injustices committed against average people (the masses), Communism had no equal or competitor.

Ho Chi Minh's silence toward Communist atrocities, whether in the Soviet Union or other Communist-controlled areas, both during his early years and later, revealed his deceptiveness and dishonesty—as well as the perversity of his political doctrine. But Ho Chi Minh was not merely silent on Communist activities; he defended international Communism throughout his life, and did so without reservation, equivocation, or apology.⁷³ As the next chapter will demonstrate, Ho Chi Minh carried out the horrific mass murders typical of Communist practice, following the examples of Lenin, Stalin, and Mao.

Moreover, Lenin's *Theses on the National and Colonial Question* (1920), along with his other writings, undoubtedly played a major role in Ho Chi Minh's acceptance of Communism and in supporting the amoral characteristics of his life. The calls for action, the concrete directives, and the certitude of direction of the *Theses* provided Ho with the political platform that he had longed for. Most historians have not disputed the fact that Ho Chi Minh responded to that document's call to free colonial possessions from their imperial oppressor. Yet more investigation of Lenin's *Theses* (and revolutionary ideology in general) is necessary for understanding the nature of Ho's decision to embrace Communism.

Lenin was quite clear in this writing regarding the correct conduct of revolutions in the colonial world. The Soviet architect called for far more than sympathetic attention to colonial peoples. What then were the major principles that Lenin advocated in his *Theses* and for “proletarian revolutions” and that Ho considered so attractive?

Lenin's directives for Communist revolutions called for a complete rejection of humane principles, forthrightness, nationalism, and democratic values. Lenin urged colonial peoples to co-opt nationalist movements for Communist ends, seizing these popular grievances as both a pretext and a support for Marxist revolution. He further urged that the middle class, the bourgeoisie, should likewise be used to strengthen the Communist revolts and then later destroyed when no longer needed.⁷⁴ He also advocated the "struggle against," the church and other religious associations because of their "medieval" characteristics and "reactionary" nature.⁷⁵ Ho Chi Minh embraced and implemented these policies throughout the duration of his life, never deviating from Lenin's instructions or designs. Ho was indeed a hard-core Communist.

Ho Chi Minh's decision to follow the Communist road also stemmed from his disdain of the politics, traditions, and abilities of the Vietnamese people: the very notions of popular politics and democracy. Ho was very clear in his early writings that the Vietnamese people lacked the sense and abilities to lead themselves or govern their own society in a democratic manner. Although he frequently praised the "sacred traditions" and "revolutionary spirit" of the Vietnamese people, he clearly believed otherwise and worked for decades to recreate Vietnamese society and control their lives through the tool of Communist totalitarianism. In 1922 he asserted in *l'Humanite*, a French socialist newspaper:

In the eyes of the natives, Bolshevism—a word which is more vivid and expressive because frequently used by the bourgeoisie—means either the destruction of everything or emancipation from the foreign yoke. The first sense given to the word drives the ignorant and timorous masses away from us; the second leads them to nationalism. Both senses are equally dangerous.⁷⁶

This last statement is noteworthy because it reveals much about Ho Chi Minh's early commitment to Communism and some of the central notions that dominated his political thought.

Ho momentarily dropped the propaganda that he often used to develop sympathy for his cause or to conceal it and revealed his disdain of the “ignorant and timid masses.” He also showed that he detested nationalism and independence movements that do not include the full scope of Communist ideology, such as dictatorship, totalitarianism, and social reconstruction through class elimination (purges). Candid revelations of Ho’s political thoughts are indeed difficult to find because he hid them so well, but these words are important for the fact that they not only reveal his inner intents but also in that they match his political actions perfectly, the relentless drive to destroy the traditions and ideas of the Vietnamese people that stood in contrast to Communist doctrine.⁷⁷

Because many historians have supported the false notion that Ho Chi Minh “was a nationalist,” a central truth of his reasons for embracing Communism has been lost. Ho Chi Minh embraced Communism partly because of the fact that he vehemently detested nationalism, considering it a “dangerous” ideology. Ho’s writings are filled with themes that criticize and disparage the major aspects of nationalism: democratic participation; self-determination; religious and philosophical life; territorial integrity, class unity, and cultural expression. He rebuffed the people who interpreted Vietnam’s problems in racial or traditional terms.⁷⁸ But in this regard Ho was simply following Lenin’s instructions on the matter of nationalism and “bourgeois revolutions,” which he considered “an evil” and a challenge to world “proletarian revolution.”⁷⁹

Ho found the very nature and essence of nationalism to be antagonistic to his chief aims of establishing Communism, gaining political power, and striving for personal gain. His writings and actions, which held an energetic mission to achieve dictatorship, to suppress popular rights, to destroy Buddhism, Christianity, and other religions, to extend Communist rule beyond

Vietnam's borders, and to reorient regional culture along Marxist lines, indicated indeed that Ho was not a nationalist and certainly not interested in meeting the needs of the Vietnamese people as a whole. Pham Van Dong remarked about Ho: "Thanks to personal study, contacts with the toiling masses and the impact of the anti-French movement in 1908, he started his revolutionary activities. Laboriously and critically examining his forefathers' endeavors, which he admired, he realized they were not right and chose his own way through perception and intuition."⁸⁰

After Ho Chi Minh made the decision to embrace Communism, he immediately plunged into the movement with fervor and resolve. Ho's early writings and activities do not reveal that he was a pragmatist, a patriot, and an agrarian revolutionary seeking independence for Vietnam and grudgingly or gradually accepting Communism. On the contrary, Ho undertook the Communist cause with zeal and determination and immediately championed Soviet leadership, international Communism, national liberation of colonial peoples through Communism, and other aspects of the Communist line.⁸¹

Ho's early writings particularly emphasized the necessity of supporting Soviet leadership of international Communism--and likewise revealed denunciations of those who rejected Soviet control. He remarked: "We believe that the Communist International and its branches, which include branches in colonial countries, will succeed in implementing the lessons and teachings the leader has left behind for us. To do what he advised us, is that not the best way to show our love for him?"⁸²

Moreover, during his early years as a Communist, he pointedly denounced the enemies of Communism, the so-called imperial powers: France, Great Britain, and the United States. Ho did not write exclusively about the problems occurring in Vietnam. A Marxist-Leninist perspective and analysis of problems in Africa, North Africa, China, Southeast Asia and other regions

permeated his early works and kept in pace with the dictates of Moscow. His choice of themes and issues are important for what they reveal about the political direction of this young Marxist-Leninist who obviously chose the road of Communist internationalism and not Vietnamese nationalism.⁸³

Of particular importance was Ho Chi Minh's early antipathy of the United States. Decades before the United States became directly involved in the affairs of Vietnam, Ho singled out the United States for political propaganda attacks, which Lenin had urged and likewise had done.⁸⁴ For example, Ho Chi Minh wrote in the early 1920s about the racial discrimination against blacks in the United States that he had discovered while in the United States. But he failed to provide the balance, context, and contrast to Soviet policies on race-- aspects necessary for an accurate assessment of world politics and the debate on Communism versus capitalism. Ho upheld these racial arguments against the United States and West for the rest of his life.

During the early twentieth century, and before, many Blacks in the United States, usually in the South, indeed suffered the terrible fate of lynching--horrible actions undertaken by mobs of whites who sought to punish ruthlessly these defenseless people for real or imagined crimes. This cruelty cannot be justified or excused but an accurate assessment of the problem should include the recourse available to blacks, their progress during the twentieth century, and a comparison to Soviet racial policy, which Ho justified completely and without criticism.

Ho falsely depicted the situation in America and exaggerated the issue so that it appeared to be typical of the treatment of all racial groups in all areas of the United States.⁸⁵ Ho further falsified the issue by denying any change in the treatment of blacks in later decades and by depicting the Soviet Union as an anti-colonial power that supported the independence and dignity of all racial groups.⁸⁶ Ho intentionally failed to mention that Blacks courageously

protested, organized, relocated to other areas of the United States, and lobbied for political rights. The Communist chief likewise failed to note that not one of these options were available in the Communist system but were specifically prohibited.

Moreover, the suffering of various racial groups under Soviet control—Mongolian, Ukrainian, German, Lithuanian, Finish, Jewish, Korean, etc., deserved, at the very least, a major consideration in a valid assessment of Communist racial policies. Execution, forced migration and assimilation, imprisonment, and terror became commonplace in the melancholy lot of existence for these ethnic peoples in the Soviet Union. For instance, Donald Rayfield's *Stalin and His Henchmen* recalled the terrible plight of the Kurds under Stalin's rule when in the winter of 1937 and 1938 about 48,000 Kurds "were given 24 hours to get into the trains that the NKVD had marshaled." Relocated to the steppes of Kazakhstan, these Kurds still wearing their summer clothes suffered the cold of the new climate where temperatures fell to 40 degrees below zero. Although no statistics have been kept, survivors estimated that about 40 percent of these victims perished.⁸⁷

If Ho Chi Minh were truly concerned with finding real solutions to the problems of "the peoples of the East," he would have addressed these critical issues with candor and resolve and would have considered these men, women, and children who resided contiguously to Russia or within these border areas.⁸⁸ Instead Ho misled the Vietnamese people by continuing to champion the Soviet Union as the defender of Eastern peoples. He asserted:

All Soviet citizens, regardless of nationality and race, enjoy complete equality and the same freedoms, not only written on paper but actually ensured. This is a situation unknown to the workers of even the most democratic bourgeois countries, where acknowledged freedoms guaranteed by law are canceled out by actual social conditions.⁸⁹

Surely Ho was not the humanitarian that he presented himself to the world and Vietnam. While Ho Chi Minh certainly wrote stinging rebukes of French imperial policies in Vietnam, the careful student of history should also notice that the denunciations of France were not based merely upon the cruelty and exploitation that underpinned French colonial policies—moral issues.⁹⁰ Ho railed against the class structure, role of international capitalism, religious influences, and other issues while upholding Marxist doctrines on society and politics. For example, Ho commented: “From this brief survey, one can see that behind a mask of democracy, French imperialism has transplanted in Annam the whole cursed medieval regime, including the salt tax, and that the Annamese peasant is crucified on the bayonet of capitalist civilization and on the Cross of prostituted Christianity.”⁹¹

In other words, rather than depicting the oppression of Vietnam by France in ethical or moral terms, violations of fundamental human rights, Ho described the plight of Vietnam during that time as a result of international capitalism, the existence of organized religion, and other Communist themes typical of Moscow’s line. Ho clearly defined his enemies as “capitalists” and not those who violated moral or humane principles. Such misunderstandings of root problems “opened the door” for his acceptance of cruelty and brutality as an effective means for change. Unfortunately, these Communist perspectives became the basis of his “socialist reforms” that later caused so much harm and suffering in Vietnam. Therefore, Ho’s vehement policies in Vietnam targeted classes and systems rather than injustices and cruelties.

Not content with a natural interpretation of Ho’s early activities in the Communist movement, many modern historical accounts insist on the point that Ho Chi Minh was a “patriot,” chiefly because of the fact that he discussed fervently many of the problems that occurred in Vietnam under French colonial rule. Rather than understanding the young Ho in

context of his times and personality, much of modern history has created a far different picture from reality.

While these accounts minimize the violence and criminal personality of Ho Chi Minh because somehow these evils were intertwined with real grievances and national problems, no such interpretation is consistently given for other tyrants in history: Adolph Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Tojo (Hideki), or even Genghis Khan. Did not these personalities from world history likewise articulate clearly many of the political and social problems particular to the suffering of their respective peoples? Shall we likewise justify Hitler and the like, excusing their brutality, because they had some legitimate complaints and problems that they aired before an uncaring world? Can we rightly call Hitler, Mussolini, and Genghis Khan “patriots”?

Ho Chi Minh moved deeper into the Communist movement during the 1920s as he practiced Communist ideology and moved beyond merely the theoretical realm. Ho remarked that the “practice” of Communism and not just its ideology furthered his resolve.⁹² His writings during that decade reflect a careful attention to the methodical and flexible application of Communism within an international context, particularly with the purpose of overcoming obstacles to successful implementation--such as language barriers, lack of organization and unity, and popular antipathies to Communist ideology. He continued his subversive activities by carefully propagandizing and penetrating the enemy’s institutions such as the French army, which Ho targeted for this very task.⁹³

Rather than assuming a secondary role in the Communist movement, Ho Chi Minh quickly became a leader of the Communist cause. Ho Chi Minh moved to the forefront rapidly, walked in step to Moscow’s orders, and became one of the founding members of the French Communist Party, which proudly asserted at their inception:

Violence is often nothing but the most obvious sign of strong and sincere convictions. So if bourgeois newspapers delight in publishing this morning that “violent incidents” marked yesterday’s meeting of the congress, we have nothing to be surprised about. It’s not in the serenity of academies or tribunals that the destiny of the revolutionary proletariat is decided: it is in the fever and tumult of action.⁹⁴

During this time, he repudiated the political notion of revisionism (deviation from hard-line Communist doctrine), which challenged the Marxist-Leninist ideas of socialism and asserted a more realistic and non-violent approach to that political discipline.⁹⁵ Revisionists such as the German socialist Eduard Bernstein and the French socialist Alexandre Millerand had called attention to the prosperity of the capitalist system, the progress of the working class that occurred through non-violent means--evidences that ran contrary to Marxist interpretations of history and economic analysis.⁹⁶ Ho’s rejection of revisionism was further evidence of his basic political tendency to seek power and drastic solutions even though other options, non-violent options, remained available and within his reach.

Ho Chi Minh was not merely supporting the French Socialist Party or Communism in France at the time. Rather, his anti-revisionism compelled him to fervently fight for the unity of the Communist Third International established by Lenin. Under the directorship of Grigory Zinovyiev, the Third International or Communist International (Comintern) called for no compromise with reformists or revisionists--anyone who adopted a pacifistic or non-violent form of socialism.

Additionally, the Comintern called for complete obedience to Soviet leadership, “day to day” propaganda that followed Comintern directives, legal and illegal (subversive) revolutionary work, daily denunciations and resistance of nationalists and democracy advocates, and purging the party of non-communists and unfaithful Communists. The militancy of the Comintern was evident for all to see in Ho’s era. For example, the Comintern rules declared:

In practically every country of Europe and America the class struggle is entering the phase of civil war. In these circumstances communists can have no confidence in bourgeois legality. They are obliged everywhere to create a parallel illegal organization which at the decisive moment will help the party to do its duty to the revolution. In all those countries where, because of a state of siege or of emergency laws, communists are unable to do all their work legally, it is absolutely essential to combine legal and illegal work.⁹⁷

Ho followed this militant anti-revisionism his entire life and upheld Communism in Vietnam over the course of the five decades that he lived. When challenged with ideological dissent during critical moments in Vietnam's history, such as the interwar period, World War II and immediately afterward, or during the Franco-Vietminh War, Ho responded with repressive campaigns to destroy the dissenters and their arguments—the so-called “anti-traitor campaigns.”⁹⁸ During the period of 1958-1960, for example, Ho implemented one such campaign that the Party described as follows:

The enemy, furthermore, plotted to destroy the national unity, oppose the Party's leadership and hinder the advance of the socialist revolution. The Party Central committee put forth many important measures to repress the counter-revolutionaries, educate cadres, party members and the people in socialist ideology, helping everyone to see the difference between the socialist path and the capitalist one, and to realize that the North must necessarily develop along the former, resolutely opposing all tendencies advocating free development of capitalism for some time before advancing toward socialism.⁹⁹

He followed this ideological war by building institutional supports, the Party apparatus, schools, and “cultural” programs that permeated every aspect of the lives of Vietnamese under his control.¹⁰⁰ Although Ho has been compared to Communist Yugoslavian dissenter Josip Broz Tito, who broke with Moscow in 1948 and pursued an independent political path, the Vietnamese Communist leader denounced Tito's revisionism as destructive to international Communism.

In 1923 Ho Chi Minh's leadership and zeal attracted the attention of the Soviet leadership in Moscow, who invited him to attend the University of the Far East, an organization under the

auspices of the Comintern. Unlike educational institutions in the free world, the University of the Far East was a school for only aspiring Communist leaders around the world, Moscow's hand-picked servants who modeled the finest characteristics of the movement and who presented the brightest prospects for the future of international Communism.¹⁰¹ Ho learned there not only the finer aspects of Lenin's doctrine but undoubtedly also the subversive techniques that Communists were famous for and that he applied effectively later.

Some scholars have noted that not only did Ho attend this school with "the blessings of Moscow," but he also showed the cunning and determination to survive the brutal purges of the Stalin era that ripped through the Communist Party apparatus later in the decade.¹⁰² Ho allegedly came under Stalin's suspicion later when he returned to the Comintern because this Vietnamese Communist placed an emphasis on colonial revolutions and not social reconstruction according to Stalin's notions. Nevertheless, Ho still emerged as the chosen vessel to spread Stalinism throughout French Indochina. Ho responded by praising Stalin throughout that dictator's life.

Ho's graduation from the University of the Far East and Moscow's training indicated that his Soviet sponsors believed he was a loyal Communist who demonstrated the personality traits and commitments necessary for dedicated service to the Comintern. For Ho's training in Moscow tested his loyalties as well as his skills at promoting "Red Fascism."¹⁰³ Historians who simply dismiss this vital aspect of Ho's personal history and treat his graduation as an event similar to that of modern graduates of Western universities are leaving out an important aspect of Ho's political development. Those within the high echelons of the Soviet leadership, who staked their lives and careers on making correct choices regarding leaders, obviously saw something within Ho Chi Minh's constitution that made him an ideal Communist worthy of the Party's support and of the responsibility to spread revolution to such a large area as Southeast Asia.

In 1924, Ho Chi Minh did not disappoint his Soviet sponsors and immediately moved to Canton, China and thereafter worked zealously as a Communist agent who developed Marxist-Leninist revolutions throughout China, Vietnam, and Southeast Asia. Though Ho was forced by the non-Communist authorities of China to leave Canton, he later returned to the region, to the city of Hong Kong, where he continued to work as an internationalist and not just on behalf of his nation, Vietnam.¹⁰⁴

During this period Ho suffered the hardships of exile and imprisonment, but proved to be a faithful Communist. While in prison Ho wrote in his journal of the experience: “One of my teeth has fallen off. My hair has turned to silver gray. Gaunt and dark as a famished ghost, my body’s full of mange and sores. Fortunately, I’ve born up and endured. I’ve yielded not one inch. The body’s racked with pain. The spirit stays unbowed.”¹⁰⁵

But more importantly for an understanding of Ho Chi Minh’s political development, the experience in prison hardened his resolve for Communism, causing him to further lose the sensitivities, the sensibilities, and the insights necessary for a humane response to national and colonial oppression. Ho acknowledged this loss of humanity but placed it within the context of “steeling” his commitment to Communism. He noted in a poem to himself and future generations: “Hard times have forged and tempered you, turning your spirit into *steel*.”¹⁰⁶

Readers who quickly pass over Ho Chi Minh’s prison experience are missing again a major event in the development of his political and character traits. The psychological transformation of individual Communists was one of the more important aspects or phenomena of the movement and should be seriously considered by observers of Communism who seek a deeper understanding of its dynamics.

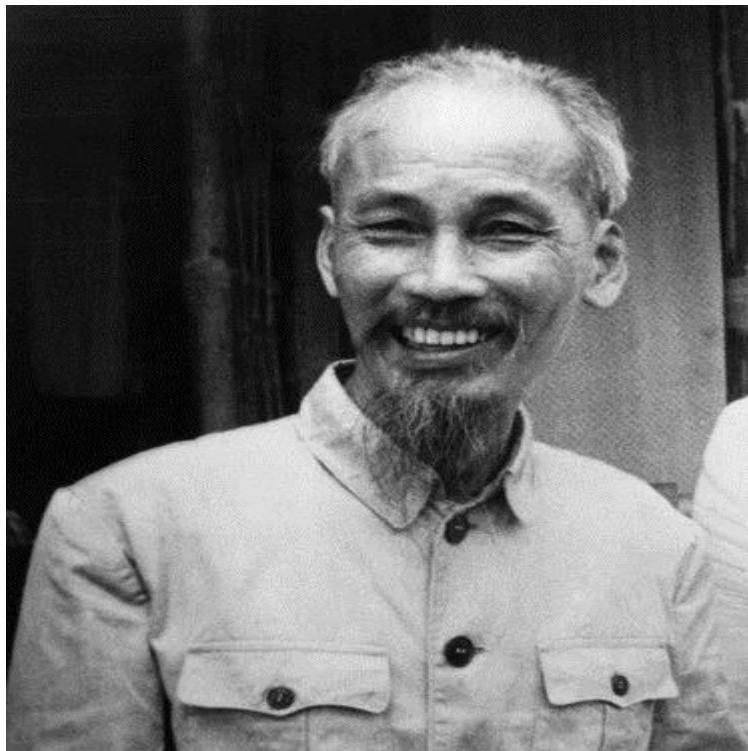
Communist parties throughout the world urged individuals within their groups to cultivate their character, a process often called “steeling” oneself.¹⁰⁷ This “steeling” of the party member was a psychological transformation that occurred through exposure to propaganda, persistent service to the Party, and one’s determination to completely sacrifice to every wish of the Communist Party. The end product was usually an individual inured to hardship, calloused toward killing, and completely subservient to the party. Often, this process of “steeling” oneself was carried out or exercised during difficult circumstances such as imprisonment, like in the case of Ho Chi Minh during his incarceration in China.

While visiting Soviet Russia during the mid-1950s, then-Vice President Richard Nixon noted this characteristic in the Communist leadership and others that he had met on his visit. “But whether it was Khrushchev, Mikoyan, or Kozlov, a lesser Communist functionary running a factory in the Urals, a shop steward on an assembly line, or a miner,” Nixon remarked, “there was a steel-like quality, a cold determination, a tough, amoral ruthlessness which somehow had been instilled into every one of them.”¹⁰⁸ Ho’s reference to “steeling” himself during his imprisonment carries a meaning far beyond the common or metaphoric use of the term: the core of a hard-core Communist had grown harder.

The experiences in Paris, Moscow, and Canton (South China), however, were not merely incidental or unrelated. Ho Chi Minh developed an integrated and holistic support base in these important centers of the Communist world that propelled his revolution forward and provided long-term support and emergency relief. Ho did not abandon any of these contacts but relied upon them for the rest of his life and revolutionary work, and left these systems in place for those

who continued his revolution. In essence, Ho had created a strategic umbrella that covered all of Indochina and thereby subjecting it to the repeated blows of the Hammer and Sickle.

More specifically, the relationships created in Paris, Moscow, and Canton met the critical needs of Ho Chi Minh's revolution. The Communist supporters in Paris provided media attention and publicity that reached the West and the international community. Paris, a well-known meeting place for Leftist revolutionaries from around the world, provided Ho with the access to these important supporters also, their ideas, methods, and contributions. The French Communist Party, in combination with the aforesaid factors, increased the political leverage at Ho's disposal.¹⁰⁹



Ho Chi Minh in one of many pictures used to depict Him as a congenial patriot

Moscow provided much of the arms, technical assistance, and materiel necessary for defeating the French during the 1950s and combating the United States later in the 1960s and early 1970s. At first China afforded only a limited amount of bases and help among the Communists there, though highly valuable, and later much support--logistics, war materiel, advisers and technicians--once Mao Zedong seized power in 1949 and won control of the mainland.¹¹⁰ By the middle of the 1960s over 100,000 Chinese soldiers were stationed in Vietnam to serve in support roles. In 1960 Ho openly acknowledged and honored his support base during a speech before the Third National Congress of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party:

The victories of the Vietnamese revolution are also due to the wholehearted assistance of the fraternal socialist countries, especially the Soviet Union and China. We avail ourselves of this opportunity to express our warm feelings of gratitude toward the fraternal socialist countries headed by the Soviet Union. We are also sincerely grateful to the other Parties, to the French Communist Party for their active support to our people's just struggle.¹¹¹

Ho Chi Minh's embracement of Communism and his development into a leader of that movement stemmed from his amoral and violent passions that he failed to subordinate to the higher values associated with human dignity, moderate reform, and popular needs. During Ho Chi Minh's early life he experienced the hardships and abuses that were typical of his generation, which suffered under French colonialism. But unlike others of his era, Ho rejected sensible and gradual reforms and instead sought immediate change directed not at increasing the quality of life of the Vietnamese people but rather at destruction of the French colonial system, and by extension, the capitalist world that he believed supported that system. His selfish enslavement to his own experiences, fixation on the destruction of French colonialism, lust for power and expediency, and lack of principles created an affinity with radical groups and later the

Communist movement, which emerged as the most powerful and successful of those radical groups.

Ho Chi Minh's life demonstrated clearly that he was not only a "hard-core Communist" but that he was a leader of that movement filled with the drives and misguided notions that commonly marked the "Bolsheviks." Ho found himself in a highly advantageous position given the opportunities that came through the growth of international Communism. He would not only have the "good fortune" of leading aspects of international Communism, he would have the possibility to build it further in the colonial world of Southeast Asia. His activities, even from the earliest periods of his Communist life, proved that he was committed to building a Vietnamese world based on the inhumane practices rooted in Soviet ideology.

But unfortunately for Americans, part of that building process entailed opposition to the security of the United States and its allies. The main question regarding Ho Chi Minh was therefore not how closely Moscow was controlling his movements, or not an empty philosophical query regarding the compatibility of Communism with "nationalism." The central question was: Did Ho Chi Minh threaten the security and interests of the United States by furthering the Soviet alliance aimed at destroying America and the Free World? The answer to the last question was a definite yes. The central question for the Vietnamese people was even more serious: Would Ho Chi Minh mimic the same brutal, totalitarian, and inhumane policies of his Communist idols--V.I. Lenin, Joseph Stalin, and Mao Zedong--and spread red terror throughout Vietnam. Tragically, his actions proved that the answer was again yes.

The Vietnam War had its roots therefore in the early life of Ho Chi Minh and not just the events of the 1950s and 1960s. Ho Chi Minh's youth was a critical time in history when one

Asian revolutionary developed antipathies and passions that had implications far beyond colonial relations between the Vietnamese people and imperial France. Nguyen “who hated the French” also hated the United States and later resisted its desires to create a free Vietnam. And war with the United States became a natural consequence of that hatred.

When American military and service personnel entered the jungles of Vietnam in mass during the 1960s, they found an Asian tiger that no longer had to hide its bucolic and untamed nature under a rented suit as he did at Versailles in 1919. This Vietnamese leader’s hatred of the West and the United States in particular had metastasized rapidly in the unhealthy body of experiences that included failures, frustrations, and fears during the French colonial period—moments in time when the virulent ideology of Communism, implanted into his soul by Moscow, had found a willing host. The transformation of Ho Chi Minh into a hard-core Communist, though a very personal experience born of bitter circumstances, had placed the young revolutionary deeply into the impersonal world of the leadership structures of international Communism, which provided the mission and the means to satisfy that Asian tigers enormous political appetite for power and predation.

Chapter 2

“Of all the Woes on Earth”: The Roots of Communist Activities in Indochina



Ho Chi Minh

In the beginning of the 1930s, after the Hong Kong police had arrested and had imprisoned Ho Chi Minh for his subversive affiliations, he languished in his cell and yearned for his personal liberties. The

humbled revolutionary bemoaned his fate as deep pains pulsing from the human spirit within decried the unnatural state of the deprivation of freedom, and he spoke as if in a language of humanity articulated more sincerely through these bruised emotions than in his normal

CHRONOLOGY:

1924: Ho Chi Minh successfully ex-filtrated to Canton and formed a Communist cell group among nationalists who gathered there.

1925: Ho Chi Minh developed the Revolutionary Youth League in Canton, preparing revolutionaries for subversive work in Vietnam and the region.

1930: Ho Chi Minh established the Indochinese Communist Party, which aimed at spreading Communism throughout the region (as the name of the Party indicated).

1931-1933: Ho Chi Minh was imprisoned by the Hong Kong police.

1935-1936: Ho Chi Minh obeyed Moscow's directives to form a United Front against Fascist aggression. Ho subsequently drove his revolution underground.

1939-1945 (WWII period): Ho Chi Minh disguised his Communist revolution as a “nationalist” resistance war against the Japanese invaders and the French colonial authorities.

1945-1946: Ho Chi Minh declared Vietnam's independence. Occupation of Vietnam by Allied victors (China, France, and Great Britain). Ho Chi Minh stalled for time and courted international support from France, United States, and others.

1946-1954: Franco-Vietminh War.

1954: Defeat of France at Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

1954: Geneva Accords negotiations designed to settle outstanding Cold War issues, including the fate of Vietnam and Laos.

discourses. He cried out: “Of all the woes on earth, the loss of freedom hurts the most. They watch your every word and deed. They drive you like a horse or cow.”¹

But ironically, shortly after his release from prison he redoubled his efforts to impose Communist totalitarianism in Vietnam. In essence, Ho created a Communist prison there, not only forgetting his experience while in confinement but also perpetuating the very suffering he knew so intimately. Thereafter he worked tirelessly to strip that beautiful land of any hopes of “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness”—the very ideals that Americans considered essential for humane government.

In 1930 Ho Chi Minh had created the Indochinese Communist Party (ICP) that aimed at establishing Marxism-Leninism in that region and particularly in Vietnam.² Ho Chi Minh’s Indochinese Communist Party succeeded remarkably because he excelled at strategic planning, leadership, propaganda, and the art of political murder. His strategies in these early years, and the character of his revolutionary activities, remained intact throughout the decades of war that followed and are therefore seminal aspects of the development of Vietnamese Communism, and thus important points for study. His success, moreover, became a model for Communist revolutions and other insurgencies.

But the peoples of Southeast Asia remember the revolutionary period not for its brilliant and adaptive strategies but rather for the unparalleled level of killing and terror at the hands of these Communist “nationalists.” Ho Chi Minh succeeded by relying to a large degree upon terrorism coupled with manipulation of the changing political conditions of the era.³ While Ho courted various and temporary alliances with the French, Chinese (Nationalists), Americans, and others, he concurrently ordered the killing of civilians, the murder of Communist cadre

(“purges”), and cultivation of class hatred, considering these aspects to be central features of his revolution.

In sheer numbers of people killed, violence upon the innocent, breadth and scope of persecutions, durability of pogroms and executions, and misery created, Ho Chi Minh’s rebellion had no equal among political movements in Vietnam. The “national liberation” of Vietnam” under Ho Chi Minh was therefore a bloody and Stalinist-like revolution and rule that relied on terror and deception rather than a redress of legitimate grievances and an implementation of genuine reforms.

Ho Chi Minh’s revolution advanced through four major periods: formation of the Indochinese Communist Party and the inter-war period (1920s to World War II), World War II (1939-1945), the Franco-Vietminh War and Geneva Accords Period (1945-1956), and the “Americanization of the War” (1956-1975). During these distinct periods the Vietnamese Communist chief used deception and terror not only systematically but also carefully, adjusting to immovable political obstacles for the moment while ruthlessly removing others that were not strong enough to stand in the way of growing Communist power.⁴

“Youth and Precious Assistance”

After Ho Chi Minh had left Moscow’s “cradle” in 1924 he began his early Communist activities in Southeast Asia by walking these first steps of the revolutionary path with a precocious confidence buttressed by both his personal successes within the Communist movement and the successes of his comrades worldwide. His strategic priority therefore remained centered on operating his organizational work within the political framework and

power sources of the Communist International (COMINTERN)—the people, plans, and products that continued to attract the young revolutionary who often witnessed their ability to overthrow capitalist authorities and thus challenge the future on Marxist terms. Far from conceiving the dead V.I. Lenin's missives as merely a general political ideology or just a beginning point for his revolution, the Vietnamese agitator relied continually upon these revolutionary thoughts and, as importantly, "precious assistance": the advice, diplomatic skills, crisis relief, finances, propaganda techniques, supplies, arms, and experiences of his comrades near and afar.⁵

Although his organizational work proceeded steadily in Indochina, "step by step" in their own words, every effort was made to integrate the youthful revolution into Moscow's international movement in order to gain maximum support and strength. During these early years a foundational doctrine stipulated that "[t]he national revolution must be integrated into the world revolution, the Vietnamese people must act in concert with the world proletariat, hence the necessity of conforming to the policy of the Third International."⁶

In the same year Ho Chi Minh "hit the ground running" when he ex-filtrated to Canton, where his extraordinary leadership and organizational skills became immediately apparent and prepared the way for the formation of the ICP over half a decade later. The bustling port city had served as a center for Sun Yat-Sen's revolutionary forces, which established the Republic of China in 1911, and remained a meeting ground since then for nationalist and revolutionary forces throughout the region.⁷

Ho's official position as representative of the Comintern to China provided the necessary legitimacy for open activities and a cover for planting a Communist cell group in Canton's fertile political soil tilled through the sweat of the nationalists.⁸ More importantly, he needed only a short time to prove that he possessed the rare political skills of survival and stealth, in addition to

determination and discipline—skills particularly evident in the personal relationships developed with his followers. The totality of these leadership skills propelled his movement forward and created a force and durability that marched over nearby borders as well as obstacles intrinsic to developing political movements.⁹

In 1925 he formed the Revolutionary Youth League, which he used to train and forge young Vietnamese whom he sent back to his native land to build the foundations of resistance that later became apparent in the wars against France and the United States. Ho's extraordinary personality and leadership capacity drew this target group of youthful revolutionaries from afar to his side where they learned the shrewd military-political arts necessary for survival and success. A North Vietnamese account noted:

In Canton, with the Tam Tam Xa as nucleus, Nguyen Ai Quoc [alias for Ho Chi Minh] set up the Thanh Nien Cach Mang Dong Chi Hoi (Young Revolutionaries' Association), Thanh Nien for short. From the homeland or from Siam, where lived a Vietnamese colony, youths came to China to attend a revolutionary training course organized by Nguyen Ai Quoc, and were sent back to the country to set up revolutionary bases.¹⁰

Even in these early years of the revolution and before, Ho Chi Minh's alluring personality captured the hearts of many young Vietnamese. Truong Nhu Tang, one early follower who was typical of many who fell under the dictator's spell, described a first encounter with Ho during a meeting in Paris:

I had never thought of myself as a person especially sensitive to physical appearances, but Ho exuded a combination of inner strength and personal generosity that struck me with something like a physical blow. He looked directly at me, and at the others, with a magnetic expression of intensity and warmth. Almost reflexively I found myself thinking of my grandfather. There was that same effortless communication of wisdom and caring with which my grandfather had personified for us the values of Confucian life.¹¹

During World War II, another follower described similar emotional connections when meeting the "magnetic" Ho—yet again a moment in time when the Communist master's ability to

grab the attention and loyalties of the young produced the deep personal ties that bind insurgencies to the future:

We came into the room. Uncle was sitting on a bed, waiting for us. Although the light was dim, we could see him clearly enough. We were struck by his broad forehead, his sparkling eyes and his features which bespoke great kindness. So it was 'he'! Our joy was indescribable and for a moment we remained speechless, just looking at him with deep emotion.¹²

Still others who described their encounters with Ho proved that their leader not only could grab their attention but also keep it. Such memories of lowly peasants resurrected to the life of exalted revolutionaries, baptized in the presence of their messianic leader, reveal vivid images of a time when they were “literally hypnotized” and “captivated by his stories of Asia and Europe.”¹³ This fanatical language among the faithful could be easily dismissed as mere propaganda if the devotion of these early followers had not proved that “the walk matched the talk.”

But if the feigned appearances of a Communist subversive could win over many Vietnamese so could his feigned message. Contrary to the mainstream histories of Vietnamese Communism, Ho Chi Minh did not merely use nationalist and popular messages to attract supporters—“independence,” “an eight-hour work day,” “literacy,” and “land to the tiller.” The master propagandist repeatedly claimed to support political rights and social freedoms that he not only failed to implement but also intentionally destroyed through his totalitarian conquests.¹⁴

Ho Chi Minh had so blatantly misrepresented and had falsified his political agenda in these early years and throughout his life that at times his platform appeared indistinguishable from that of an American politician or any other democratic statesman. These false promises by Ho were a major aspect of his propaganda, and he ordered the Indochinese Communist Party in the middle of the 1930s to emphasize these themes more: “It [the ICP] should only claim for

democratic rights, freedom of organization, freedom of assembly, freedom of press and freedom of speech, general amnesty for all political detainees, and struggle for the legalization of the party,” he asserted.¹⁵ The so-called “popular support” of Ho Chi Minh therefore rested on lies, confusion, and deception rather than political advocacy for the legitimate needs of the people of Vietnam.

Ho mixed these potent leadership, personality, and propaganda qualities with his remarkable discipline, ensuring the prosperity of his organizational work through the early years. His strength of mind and character exercised persistence and patience evident in the completion of the mundane and every-day tasks of building a revolution, leaving few details unattended.¹⁶ Covert activities, propaganda development, organization of cells, subversion of authority, and basic training of cadre--none of which were decisive alone or original to Communism--nevertheless carried the unique logo of Ho Chi Minh, identifying its quality and guaranteeing its performance.

Ho’s “ordinary and simple deeds, concrete and practical ways of doing modest and firm first steps; small and simple forces at the start” placed his revolution on a slow but certain footing where growth and strength marched together balancing one another like the firm gait of his Vietminh soldiers who later evolved from this structure.¹⁷ North Vietnamese General Chu Van Tan remarked about these foundational years:

He was a disciplined man, and followed a fixed schedule of eating, sleeping and working, doing everything in its own time, and he deviated from this schedule only if the situation became tense. If he said he would do something, he set about doing it right away. If he reminded one of us to do something, he immediately proceeded to show him how to go about doing it.¹⁸

As young revolutionaries poured into his organization, often fleeing the persecution of the French colonial crackdown on subversive activities, Ho managed the rising popularity of his

movement by mixing ruthless discipline with steadfastness, not allowing the Revolutionary Youth League to lose either ideological purity or revolutionary fervor as so many other similar organizations had.¹⁹ For those who became slack with their duties, “Nguyen the Patriot” (as he was often called) forwarded their names to the enemy--the colonial authorities who sought their capture-- whereupon punishments were meted out severely and lethally. Ho quietly took the cash bounty for his services and used these funds as he saw fit.²⁰



Ho Chi Minh and Vo Nguyen Giap, 1945

Another major characteristic of Ho’s early leadership was his ability to train dedicated leaders to support his role. Ho successfully replicated his character in those who followed him, carrying these revolutionary qualities into the building of the Communist “utopia” that later haunted Vietnam and whose specter remains to this day. If Ho can be described as the Leninist cornerstone crafted in Moscow then his early followers were certainly the foundation, which was made of the same substance and rested upon that cornerstone, creating a durable edifice aligned

precisely with that rock-like personality. During this early period men like Vo Nguyen Giap, Le Duan, Le Duc Tho, and Pham Van Dong joined the struggle—revolutionaries whose devotion was unquestionable, and if not so ruthless, certainly admirable.²¹

North Vietnamese General Le Quang Ba's matter-of-fact history of the period, typical of those written by Ho's early followers, seems almost irrelevant had it not testified of the adroit secrecy and extraordinary zeal that characterized Vietnamese Communist leaders and their activities spreading through Vietnam. General Le noted such activities in his own province and stated dryly: "Toward 1926-1927, at a time when we were seeking to improve our condition, Hoang Dinh Rong, the first man in our province to become a communist, began his activities in our region under the guise of a private teacher. He first set about winning my friend Quoc Van over to the revolutionary cause."²²

General Chu noted similarly about successful organizational activities and the growth that he witnessed in 1934:

Comrade Hoang Quoc Viet soon opened a training course where he expounded elementary principles of Communism, and principles of clandestine work, propaganda and organization of peasants. I was deeply interested and immediately joined in revolutionary action. The light of the Party gradually penetrated into the remotest corners of Vu Nhai, Bac Son and Thai Nguyen, and my heart was a flame. . . . [W]e began working feverishly, distributing leaflets, posting bills, collecting subscriptions to the newspapers *Tin Tuc* and *Doi Nay*, sending petitions in favour of political prisoners, demonstrating against a return to the 1884 treaty. . . . Under the leadership of the Party, political struggle was taking shape.²³

Nevertheless, these crafty members of the ICP suffered much under French "counter-revolutionary activities" but managed to survive by using this zeal and stealth: hiding the identity of local leaders, reserve forces in nearby villages, and operational activities under a cloak of legitimate jobs commonly employed by Vietnamese peasants.²⁴ Moreover, Ho and his Party, ever the masters of subterfuge, carefully hid their affiliations with Russian and Chinese

Communist leaders²⁵—a deception carried through with such effectiveness that many modern pundits fail to uncover the international connection and thus fall victim to the propaganda of the late revolutionary.

Even in this early stage of development Ho Chi Minh could have rested on the labor and successes of his subordinates and abandoned his own grass-roots organizational work, retreating to the safety of rear-area leadership. But he did not. In 1928 while Ho's supporters worked zealously in Vietnam to spread the Communist cause, their leader burned "Red hot" in his Communist zeal and turned his fiery energies to Thailand where he again seized the nationalist and humanitarian banners to rally many in the Vietnamese community to his cause.

Just like his Party's propaganda work in Vietnam, there was little hint of Communist ideals amid the popular messages fed to these Vietnamese abroad. The humbled appearances of Ho dressed as a Buddhist priest, stooped low and working side by side with poor Vietnamese in Thailand, masked neatly the development of a political movement and an indigenous core of cadre that served his purposes. N. Khac Huyen described the remarkable facade: "To set an example, the slender man of Buddha himself carried bricks in waived baskets, mixed mortar, actively and enthusiastically participated in construction work."²⁶

Historians who find a deep affinity with the notion that Ho Chi Minh was "first a nationalist and then a Communist second" should take careful note of the implication of his organizational work in Thailand, which proved the very opposite. This historical event becomes a "double hurdle" for the mental races run by many scholars, who first have to justify on the grounds of nationalism his Communist activities outside of Vietnam (again), and secondly justify the fact that Ho chose a country that was neither dominated by the French nor attempting to

liberate itself from imperial oppression. For Thailand was never a part of French or British colonial possessions in Southeast Asia (or a possession of any other Western power).

“Siam,” as Thailand was commonly called during the era, had cherished a long history of independence and retained its self-government through the colonial period and later rapidly developed in the post-WWII era. The fact that Ho Chi Minh risked inciting the wrath of Thai officials while stretching his resources beyond French Indochina to Communize this country over the course of four decades reveals the depth and ideological fervor of the Communist zeal that propelled his activities-- and his aim of destroying all non-Communist governments in his reach.²⁷

Ho Chi Minh’s zeal for agitation and organization mixed and matched with his ability to execute operations well. Indeed, the fox-like aggressor could “rob the chicken coup” because he had an uncanny ability to sense the presence of problems and gauge the pace of progress, and then adapt his pursuits to the realities of these circumstances. Unlike Vietnam’s many non-Communist political groups, which likewise sought to organize revolutionary power to expel France from Vietnam, Moscow’s professional agent guided the pace of his movement’s operations with a remarkable sensitivity to both opportunities and obstacles and thereby immediately distinguished it qualitatively from other indigenous groups, which could not equal this feat.²⁸

Equally significant during this critical building period, Ho developed “command and control” over local Party work, activities that soon demonstrated the coveted characteristics of intrinsic flexibility and spontaneity within the proscribed political guidelines--as well as a high degree of operational coordination with upper levels of command (i.e., the Central Committee).²⁹ This matchless unity and symmetry of the movement, coupled with Ho’s dynamic leadership,

became so evident that his nationalist rivals paid him the grudging honor of imitating his organizational tactics over the course of the following decades even though they remained ideological enemies of his cause.³⁰

Party cadre at the grass-roots level of the ICP remained sensitive to either moving too fast or too slow in regard to revolutionary work lest they commit “rightist errors” or “leftist errors”—terms used within the movement for guiding political and operational orientations. This cadre commonly discriminated between seizing opportunities and refraining from “leaping” into the appearances of such, choosing often to forgo risky agitation for the alternative of additional building, training, and consolidating Party structures. While Party leaders shunned the notion of “leaping” at opportunities as a poor substitute for “stepping”—the patient process of daily building the Communist cause--these same leaders held a confident hope that the changing balance of power between the capitalist world and the proletarian revolution would indeed bring big opportunities for “leaps and bounds” in progress.³¹

Yet these early successes were not without significant challenges that required strategic shifts, operational adjustments, and corrective actions--situations that developed not just from local conditions but from changes in the international balance of power. Ho proved quite adroit at mastering these convulsive forces in world history and concurrently maintaining his support locally and internationally. For instance, during the global depression that swept the world after the stock market crash in the United States in 1929, Ho soon found that Vietnam was plunged into economic chaos and social disorder: strikes, food shortages, political unrest, and revolution—a development that created obstacles as well as opportunities for his insurgency.

While using his Party in 1930 and 1931 to direct these “revolutionary discontents,” Ho experienced one of his more significant setbacks. A revolt that erupted in Central Vietnam

ended abruptly in defeat at the hands of the French colonial leaders, who brutally repressed insurrectionist hopes and left the young ICP wounded and crawling to the safety of Vietnam's underground. The defeat occurred partly because of a lack of popular support and partly because of French military power. Shortly thereafter Ho attempted to gain more popular support by adjusting his propaganda message, further hiding Communist themes, and stressing more nationalist themes such as independence, unity, and racial dignity of the Vietnamese people.³²

However, not all of the challenges that Ho Chi Minh faced involved national matters but others that reached to the very pinnacle of leadership within the Comintern. During the 1930s Ho Chi Minh faced a serious challenge from his Communist masters. As Fascist Italy, Germany, and Japan (the Axis Powers) formed the Anti-Comintern Pact in 1936, an alliance aimed at the destruction of the Soviet Union and its international supporters, Moscow pressured Ho to subordinate his regional revolution to the priorities of the Kremlin and make "peace" with France rather than fighting it. The "United Front" strategy, which advocated a temporary alliance between Communist groups and democratic countries in order to offset Axis power, did not sit well with Ho.³³

Like other Communists who had backed Stalin and yet had found his wishes contrary to personal tastes, Ho struggled to accept orders from Moscow with the accustomed servility demanded by that system. Ho grudgingly accepted this dictate but did so while further building his revolutionary forces.³⁴ Nevertheless, his ability to adjust to even the most repugnant aspects of Moscow's leadership, problems that often alienated Marxist leaders within the Comintern, should be understood within the context of his remarkable ability to manipulate power and survive among the aggressive forces within the Communist movement.

But Ho Chi Minh did not simply capitulate to the French colonial authorities. He intensified the “legal activities” of lobbying for political rights and freedoms while simultaneously he drove his revolutionary activities underground. This two-tiered strategy--typically used by Communist parties--was very effective. Pham Van Dong noted again:

In the 1936-1939 period, through many letters and newspaper articles sent to the Central Committee, Ho Chi Minh described ways to use of temporarily favourable conditions, organized open and legal activities, gathered and led the masses to struggle in various ways, and gradually brought all the people to the revolutionary front. At the same time, he remarked many times that the Party had to have a section working underground, in secrecy, concealing its forces and carefully preparing for dealing with an enemy which would resort to terrorism in order to push back the revolution.³⁵

Indeed, Ho Chi Minh’s revolutionary tactics during this period were not merely reactive but also proactive and aggressive. According to his thinking, opportunities must be created and not just awaited--lest the “error of passivity” be committed.³⁶ Subsequently, he ordered the mass killing of the rural landlord class in Communist controlled areas. As early as 1931, Ho oversaw the “neutralizing” of hundreds of landlords in Nge Tinh, as he “gradually” created rural soviets.³⁷ During the period, Ho ordered his followers to observe the following:

The Party must assume a wise, flexible attitude with the bourgeoisie, strive to draw it into the Front, win over the elements that can be won over and neutralize those which can be neutralized. We must by all means avoid leaving them outside the Front, lest they should fall into the hands of the enemy of the revolution and increase the strength of the reactionaries.³⁸

Ho’s used political murder to create opportunities for establishing his revolutionary government and to step into the political vacuum that his insurgents created. Although treated lightly by many historians (if at all), the use of political murder was a major activity of early Vietnamese Communist activities, events given cursory but frequent attention in Party literature and often justified under the guise of eliminating “traitors” and “the liquidation of the exploiting classes”³⁹ Throughout the duration of this period and his entire life, he systematically removed

or destroyed, through well-calculated acts of political murder, rival political parties, village leadership, landlords, and colonial supporters. Achieving power through sheer violence against vulnerable political and social groups was indeed a central mission of Ho Chi Minh's revolution, used routinely for gaining power rapidly and increasing the momentum of his movement.

But political violence wheeled by Ho Chi Minh and his followers targeted more than just non-Communist groups. Like other Communist leaders Ho frequently purged his own party and terrorized, tortured, and killed its members for real and imaginary reasons. Fearing the infiltration of French or rival groups, or non-Communist ideological influences, Ho purged the Party throughout the 1930s and 1940s—and thereafter. One such example of the period involved a “comrade” who allegedly seduced a female member of the ICP. After execution the body was burned.⁴⁰ The extent of Ho Chi Minh's victimization therefore reached well into his own organizations and among his adherents.⁴¹

“The Double Yoke”



Vo Nguyen Giap with Viet Minh forces in 1944 during the Japanese Occupation of Vietnam

The outbreak of World War II afforded additional opportunities for Ho Chi Minh to manipulate public sentiment and advance his revolution. As hordes of Japanese invaders ravished Vietnam and collaborated with Vichy France and its colonial supporters in Vietnam, Ho exploited the spontaneous outburst of popular antipathy against the invaders as well as an equally intense hatred of the French, who refused to provide sufficient protection of the Vietnamese people. Ho depicted his revolution as a nationalist movement fighting the “double yoke” of French colonialism and Japanese Fascism and called on all Vietnamese to unite and fight against the common enemy. He declared:

Rich people, soldiers, workers, peasants, intellectuals, employees, traders, youth, and women who warmly love your country. At the present time national liberation is the most important problem. Let us unite together! As one in mind and strength we shall overthrow the Japanese and French and their jackals in order to save people from the situation between boiling water and burning heat.⁴²

The seasoned revolutionary further used the memory of Vietnam’s glorious past resistance to invaders as a powerful means to create unity for his Communist cause. He declared further: “The sacred call of the fatherland is resounding in your ears; the blood of our heroic predecessors who sacrificed their lives is stirring in your hearts! The fighting spirit of the people is displayed everywhere before you! Let us rise up quickly!”⁴³ Young Vietnamese responding to these patriotic themes picked up the crude weapons of sticks and stones, and joining others who were well-armed, filled the ranks of the Communist movement causing it to swell into another phase of expansion-- pregnant from the rapid growth in military and political organization. Thus the “Vietminh” (the name given by the Communist Vietnamese to their newer “nationalist” cause) was born in 1941 as yet another illegitimate child of international Communism while Ho again stood as the midwife.⁴⁴

A particularly potent aspect of Ho Chi Minh's early revolutionary work included the successful exploitation of the entire region of Indochina. As the name indicated, the "Indochinese Communist Party" conceived by Ho encompassed the whole of Indochina and not just Vietnam. Ho drew strength and gained advantages from the peoples, geography, and resources of mainland Southeast Asia, limited only by the authorities who opposed him and the resources at his disposal.

In addition to Thailand mentioned previously, he targeted Cambodia and Laos and cleverly used the region's extensive terrain, border areas, safe-havens, patchy authority structures (limited reaches of each governing authority and administrative region) to the advantage of his Reds. It should be noted in this regard that both the Revolutionary Youth League and the ICP were founded in China, where he exploited the higher degree of support and safety, as well as the absence of French authority. Ho also demanded that his cadre utilize the support throughout the region and develop "close solidarity between the peoples of Viet-Nam, Cambodia, and Laos. . . ."⁴⁵ Pham Van Dong remarked on this matter:

As for fraternal countries and revolutionary movements, especially for Laos and Cambodia, Ho Chi Minh instilled in the Vietnamese people in general and his cadres in particular the thinking that 'helping friends is also helping ourselves.' Vietnam resistance wars supported by the whole of mankind were a modest contribution to the world revolutionary cause and Ho Chi Minh's proletarian internationalism through practical revolutionary work.⁴⁶

Yet students of history who search their historical atlases to understand these issues better and to find the borders of Southeast Asian nations of the period can easily deceive themselves if they follow the neat lines that smoothly delineate one country from another--a visual representation which implies that these lines mark where one power began and another ended. For these *de jure* national boundaries belie the *de facto* political realities that occurred during the time and fail to indicate the political authority held by the Communists in these border regions.

Ho Chi Minh's followers trampled national boundaries and exploited these areas, finding many advantages for building their insurgency. These Vietnamese Communists particularly benefitted from the degree of control held by Mao Zedong's supporters along China's borders with mainland Southeast Asia.

For instance, the ICP effectively exploited the border areas between China and Vietnam, using these areas for bases, safe-havens, training, and access farther into China.⁴⁷ General Le noted during World War II:

Near our place, on the other side of the frontier, there was a strong Chinese guerrilla base. We decided to have a close look. So I crossed the frontier. The Chinese comrades and we decided to give each other assistance and to establish a guerrilla base in our region. So we could rely on support from both sides of the frontier. . . . From Luc Khu, the influence of our action spread to neighboring regions especially to Pac Bo. Our bases formed a corridor along the frontier, solidly leaning on the revolutionary base comprising the three southernmost provinces in China. On both sides of the frontier we had active supporters.⁴⁸

Similarly, Ho and his followers recognized the strategic importance of Laos and Cambodia, where additional "agit-prop" work weakened French colonial authority, spread its military forces throughout the region, and supplied the Communist Vietnamese with more space for evading and exhausting the larger and more heavily-equipped French army. The additional supporters in the region would also minimize the strain on Vietnamese Communist manpower and supplies.⁴⁹ At first Ho's work in these areas concentrated on recruitment and organization of cell groups; later, however, these areas became major grounds for military activity as the ICP's revolutionary forces grew in complexity and operability.⁵⁰

But Ho did not have to create such a movement *ex nihilo* ("out of nothing"). Popular grievances against French colonialism in Southeast Asia coupled with Ho's preponderance of power over other revolutionary causes (made possible by Communist bloc support) made him a seductive choice difficult to resist. Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Ho's early work in

Indochina—incubating, planting, training, uniting, and strategically posturing/deploying forces—began to change the potency of the Communist revolutions in Laos and Cambodia by an order of magnitude. These historical events which still disturb the memories of nationalists throughout Indochina, patriotic men and women who contemplate the agony and suffering of decades of Communist tyranny, remain nearly absent in print and discourse among too many Americans, who should be analyzing these histories to better understand life in Southeast Asia.⁵¹

The realization of a burgeoning Indochinese Communist revolution challenged French authorities and later grew into the “wider war” that deeply disturbed American policymakers. These Communist activities reflected not only the growth of Ho Chi Minh’s revolution but also his ability to recognize its maturity and further cultivate it. By the mid-1940s, he proved in Vietnam that he could unite diverse causes, consolidate effectively his revolutionary work, militarize increasingly his movement, and expand steadily his organizational activities.⁵²

While young Americans wearing khaki pants or pleated skirts, creased by winds of victory in Europe and Japan as much as by leaps of joy in hometown parades, filled streets dotted by Woolworth Department stores and local barber shops, where fluttering banners of the Stars and Stripes seemed to dance in step with returning G.I.s, a sinister development far away indicated that war was not over in 1945. Enthralled at media images of a fire-gutted Berlin and of nuclear mushroom clouds that blotted out the brilliance of the land of the rising sun, most Americans (as well as other Westerners) were caught in the rapture of the moment but unaware that the seeds of “America’s most difficult war” had sprouted roots deeply into Indochina’s rich dark soil.⁵³

“A Declaration of Independence”



Ho Chi Minh 1945

As World War II ended in 1945 and the Japanese departed Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh again seized the moment by openly revolting against the invaders and asserting the independence of Vietnam from French colonial rule.⁵⁴ On September 2, 1945 he mounted a large platform in Hanoi and appealed to the Vietnamese people and the world to recognize his movement and its leadership of an independent Vietnam. During the speech, Ho's gangly frame jutted out sharply under his khaki Asian-styled suit as he declared his indictment against French colonialism and his vain promises of supporting the Vietnamese people. Ho's rail-like body running awkwardly parallel with the tall metal microphone before him seemed to mimic crudely its shiny but lifeless

rigid positioning and purpose on the platform—the two serving as products of humans but not necessarily humanity. Southeast Asia’s newest leader, basking in the limelight of victory and an audience with foreign dignitaries, looked like a minor actor on a world stage elevated above his thespian skills.

But the awkward-looking revolutionary wearing white rubber sandals was no amateur actor. Using lofty Western ideals of “self determination,” “fraternity,” and “independence,” which streamed from his lips during his public address, Ho moved his audience and demonstrated that his sophisticated political language matched a cunning instinct for public affairs and a sharp understanding of international relations. Perhaps he reached his political crescendo when he cited the American Declaration of Independence.

Nevertheless, Ho Chi Minh failed to move the American officials who watched from near and afar. Washington’s assessments in the post-WWII era demanded concrete actions and practices that upheld not the forms but the substance of the words used quite freely by the radical Left and codified in the treaties at the end of the war. American policymakers determined soon enough that the man who trampled the very ideas propounded in his speech, and who sought to maneuver his Communist revolution to victory, was no freedom fighter but rather “the mortal enemy of native independence in Indochina.”⁵⁵

Ho Chi Minh immediately proved the validity of this assessment by taking advantage of the political vacuum that existed in his country after World War II ended.⁵⁶ Rather than advocating for and helping the middle class, nationalists, and other Vietnamese as he had promised, the self-anointed President of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) lashed out at these peoples and groups and instituted some of the most horrific political killings of his revolutionary life. The bloody executions and power-grabbing that followed seemed more like a

scene out of the movie *The Godfather* rather than behavior commonly associated with civilized politics.

Ho Chi Minh's Party, using revolutionary ideology like gasoline thrown on a fire, cultivated violence and incited raw and unbridled hatred among the Vietnamese people in order to destroy the opposition. After a kidnapping and assassination campaign created by local initiative and allowed by Ho's supporters killed thousands and took many more than that hostage in August and September of 1945, the ICP declared publically that it regretted that it did not kill more of its enemies.⁵⁷ The Vietnamese Communists boasted that it is better to kill ten innocent people than to allow one guilty to go free. Like Mao, Ho Chi Minh and his supporters did not want to limit the violent rages of the Vietnamese people because these passions succeeded in weakening the opposition even though it caused many innocent deaths.⁵⁸

Moreover, nationalist groups, local Mandarins, "reactionaries," landlords, and rival Communist groups ("Trotskyites") suffered much under the brutal rage of Ho Chi Minh and his nascent national government.⁵⁹ Ironically, Ho used the French authorities during this period to assist with the elimination of these political organizations.⁶⁰ Mrs. Le Thi Anh, a young nationalist during the time, recalled the horrible massacre:

I stayed in the underground until 1952, a couple of years before Mr. Diem came home. I left because I saw too many frightening things. The Communists were grabbing all the power by killing off the nationalists.

The Communists had organized in the resistance with us. We fought together and regarded them as comrades in arms. But sometimes in the middle of the night they would tell us, 'Hold the area.' And they would leave to indicate to the French where our nationalist positions were. The Communists betrayed us all the time. Ho Chi Minh's people began to kill off all of the strong non-Communist leaders and Trotskyite Communists in the resistance. One of my uncles, Le Trong, and friends like Dr. Suong, after collaborating with the Communists were killed by them. Huynh Phu So, the leader of the Hoa Hao Buddhist sect, whom I knew personally, was also killed by Ho's people."

I survived because at first I was too young to be considered a potential rival. I never dared to question what the Communists did. I didn't know what Communism was. The rhetoric looked good. But they killed off a lot of patriots more intelligent and mature than I.”⁶¹

Ho Chi Minh's massacre of the opposition proved to be not just ferocious in its methods and thoroughness--the numbers of lives taken--but also in the ability to decapitate the leadership of these political rivals of the Vietminh. Two South Vietnamese generals who lived through this period remarked:

In their jockeying for power the Viet Minh did not hesitate to liquidate any adversaries they deemed dangerous. Bui Quang Chieu, founder of the Constitutional Party, Vo Van Nga, leader of the Party for Independence, and Nguyen Van Sam, the Imperial Delegate to Cochinchina, were all assassinated. In Hue, the Viet Minh killed the scholar Pham Quynh and Ngo Dinh Koi, Ngo Dinh Diem's eldest brother, both from the former Bao Dai government and dignitaries with prestige in their times. The Viet Minh did not even spare their own comrades who happened to have divergent views; they killed Ta Thu Thau, for example, who was leader of the Trotskyist Struggle Group. This reign of terror eventually brought the collapse of the nationalist movement in the South and gave the Viet Minh the indisputable leadership position in the resistance movement.⁶²

The destruction of the Nationalist Party of Vietnam in the summer of 1945 emerged as a particularly tragic episode in the horrific legacy of Ho Chi Minh and the ICP. Established in 1927, the Nationalist Party rejected Communism but sought independence from the French. The Nationalists, also called the Viet Nam Quoc Dan Dang (VNQDD), were a viable alternative to Ho Chi Minh's Communists and therefore had to be “liquidated” by the ICP, according to its thinking.⁶³ Ho admitted as much and declared that because they did not cooperate with the “revolutionary government” they had to be “annihilated.”⁶⁴ The “annihilation” of the VNQDD at Ho's behest was a shocking act of barbarity that American military adviser Rufus Phillips described as follows:

The French were famous for intrigue. In 1945-1946, the French and Ho's Communists worked together to eliminate the non-Communist nationalist

Vietnamese organizations. In this deal, the French turned over their files on the VNQDD and Dai Viets to Ho Chi Minh. This perpetrated a massacre of nationalist leaders all over Vietnam. In one particular case, I met a VNQDD guy who had escaped. He was still fairly young at the time. He told me that nationalists were simply hit on the head, sewn up in sacks, and dumped into the rivers—literally hundreds and hundreds.⁶⁵

One of the more egregious distortions of the history of the Vietnam War occurs because many historians have failed to include or to address squarely this essential piece of Ho Chi Minh's history. Because the elimination of nationalists proved that Ho Chi Minh detested nationalism and freedom, and was neither the humanitarian nor the patriot that many modern histories of the Vietnam War have created, this telling event regarding the VNQDD has been omitted or distorted. The fact remains: nationalism was alive and growing in Vietnam until Ho Chi Minh destroyed it as an organized political movement simply because it rivaled Communist power.

Historical myth has replaced this truth about Ho Chi Minh and his revolution. An example of this myth making about the war occurs commonly in modern college textbooks today. For example, George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal* (1994), a popular college textbooks on the Vietnam War, depicted the destruction of the Nationalists as the result of the French colonial authorities alone. Subsequently, Moss' portrayed the Communists under Ho in terms that indicated not only their innocence in the matter but also in terms that falsely show that they were patriots. Moss asserted:

The failed uprising meant the end of the VNQDD as a major nationalistic movement. Afterward, French authorities destroyed the VNQDD organization; some of its leaders were able to escape to exile in China.

Following the destruction of the VNQDD, Marxist organizations took over the revolutionary nationalist cause in Vietnam. In 1930, the Indochinese Communist Party was organized by a professional revolutionary and Vietnamese patriot calling himself Nguyen Ai Quoc ("Nguyen the Patriot"). The world would later know him as Ho Chi Minh.⁶⁶

In 1945, following the example of other Communist revolutions, Ho Chi Minh augmented his organizational power in order to further perpetuate terrorist acts. He instituted totalitarian controls in areas that he held while forming a powerful “state security” organization in Saigon, which facilitated his brutal policies. Around the same time, his Vietminh formed the Assault Assassination Committee, an organization comprised of local criminals and thugs, who roamed the streets and brutalized the alleged enemies of Vietnam. *The Black Book on Communism* noted:

The Viet Minh formed the Assault Assassination Committee, which marched through the streets. Most of its members were recruited from the local underworld, and it was at the head of the anti-French pogrom of 25 September that left dozens of mutilated corpses in its wake. Vietnamese women who had married Frenchmen were also systematically slaughtered, although these actions were blamed on people who were not really members of the Viet Minh.⁶⁷

Furthermore, the ICP created a prison system that routinely tortured and killed many of its captives. Despite Ho’s public statements that called for leniency and humane treatment of prisoners of the Communist revolution,⁶⁸ his prison system tortured to death thousands of French prisoners. Although the Vietnamese Communists held 20,000 French Expeditionary Forces, by the time of the Geneva Accords in 1954 only 9,000 were still alive.⁶⁹ The torture of these French prisoners was a portent of the terrible suffering that awaited American prisoners of war in the 1960s.

The Party’s acts of terrorism and murder cut deeply into the grassroots of Vietnamese society and transcended mere moments or incidents in the post-WWII era, for “proletarian revolution” was far more calculated, far more sweeping and systematic. Suffering and fear became an intimate part of Vietnamese life through the 1940s and into the 1950s, causing many to understand that Ho Chi Minh’s “independence” was much more inhumane than “enslavement”

under French colonialism. Hoang Van Chi recalled the widespread terror experienced under the newly formed Democratic Republic of Vietnam and its Land Reform in 1951:

Cadre were ordered by the Party; 'Better to kill ten innocents than let one reactionary escape.' Quota were set in every village; at least one must be publicly executed. But if a village was quite big, they increased the number. Others are sent to jail. But the number of people who died by violent execution is much smaller than those who died because of isolation. When the family is branded 'landlord' nobody in the town is allowed to communicate with them. The family must live inside the house with nothing to eat. As a consequence, many people died of starvation, children and old people first.⁷⁰

But at the same time Ho Chi Minh was "liquidating" his political opponents after World War II had ended, he and his Vietnamese Communists faced a major challenge from the Allied victors, a challenge that sheer violence could not meet. In order to restore stability in Vietnam and facilitate the exodus of the Japanese, the United States assisted the return of the French, along with further Allied assistance from Nationalist China and Great Britain.⁷¹ Consequently, Ho Chi Minh became surrounded by an overwhelming force that significantly minimized his ability to operate and even survive. The deceptive Ho, however, did not vacillate.

Applying Lenin's policy of collaboration with "the enemy" in order to gain time to mobilize and rebuild, Ho feigned support of the Allied forces while courting all Allied parties involved.⁷² One by one, he played off the various occupying groups, hastening the exodus of the Chinese and the British, until France was isolated. Pham Van Dong stated succinctly about this tactic:

After September 2, 1945 and throughout 1946, the Vietnamese revolution went through a stormy period. The destiny of the homeland was at stake. In those hard months and years, Ho Chi Minh showed himself to be courageous, clever and creative, reacting sensitively and in a timely way to various situations, using many techniques to divide enemies, now working with the Chinese Kuomintang troops to deal with the French colonialists, then compromising with the latter to rapidly drive Chiang Kaishek troops home. Under his guidance, our people foiled all the manoeuvres [sic] of both internal and external enemies, held on firmly to revolutionary power, and raced against them to prepare [sic] the nationwide

resistance war against the French aggression. Thinking back to that time I cannot help asking what would have happened without Ho Chi Minh.⁷³

Having minimized Allied power in the region, and left to deal with the attempts of France to reassert colonial rule over Vietnam, Ho stalled for time in order to further develop his revolutionary forces. Even though Ho then faced far less resistance since the removal of Allied forces from the region, his forces were still ill prepared to fight the French, who were returning in large numbers and renewed strength since the end World War II had freed additional military forces from the field.

Ho consequently undertook diplomatic initiatives with the French, using false promises of peace, promises to cooperate with the French Union, and an alleged affinity of political ideals with France. In 1946 he beckoned: “French people! We have affection for you and sincerely want to cooperate with you within the framework of the French Union because we have a common ideal which is freedom, equality, and independence.”⁷⁴ But the whole negotiation process with France was nothing but a deception to buy more time. Ho Chi Minh noted:

Mention should be made of the Preliminary Agreement of March 6, 1946, and the *modus vivendi* of September 14, 1946, because they were considered as ultrarightist and caused much grumbling. But in the opinion of our comrades and compatriots in the South, they were correct. Indeed they were, because our comrades and compatriots cleverly availed themselves of this opportunity to build up and develop their forces. Lenin said that even if a compromise with bandits was advantageous to the revolution, he would do it.

We needed peace to build our country, and therefore we made concessions to maintain peace. Although the French colonialist broke their word and unleashed war, nearly one year of temporary peace gave us time to build up our basic forces. When the French deliberately provoked war, we could no longer put up with them, and the nation-wide war broke out.⁷⁵

During this “rebuilding” period when Ho Chi Minh admitted that he intentionally deceived Allied nations in order to gain time and support, one of the more controversial events of the history of the Vietnam conflict occurred. In 1945, Ho had not only cited the American

Declaration of Independence when declaring independence for Vietnam, but he also petitioned the United States directly for support of his revolution and “appeared” to be favorable toward democratic reform.⁷⁶



Modern history books continue to embrace Ho Chi Minh’s propaganda

The fact that United States authorities rejected these petitions has been used by critics of the war as “proof” that Ho Chi Minh was a pragmatist and that American policy, misguided in its overreaction to Communism, missed an opportunity to embrace a potential ally or at least avert the terrible troubles that lied ahead. This argument has been used as commonly as any other criticism against American involvement in the war and American policy in general.⁷⁷

In addition to the fact that Communist authorities, including Ho Chi Minh, openly stated that they used these opportunities as a deception, another factor is salient. What did Ho’s petitions to the United States contain? The documents containing Ho Chi Minh’s requests have been made available through the *Pentagon Papers*. These papers indicate clearly that the very

request was duplicitous. Ho requested that the United States, United Nations, Soviet Union, and China assist Vietnam in its independence under the Vietnamese Communists. He supported his claim by asserting that Vietnam under the Communists had achieved “popular elections, abolition of undesirable taxes, expansion of education and resumption as far as possible of normal economic activities.”⁷⁸

But did he? Did Ho establish “free elections” or did he perpetuate the execution of thousands within the electorate while denying free speech to those allowed to live? Did a multiparty system function in this electoral process? Did he restore economic activity or begin the destruction of the propertied class of that former economic system? The answers were obvious to American policymakers who indeed refused to acknowledge these disingenuous requests.⁷⁹

Yet, while Ho Chi Minh sought legitimacy from Western powers like the United States, Great Britain, and France, he continued his mass executions of the people of Vietnam for the next decade, and another decade beyond that during “the American War.” Following Mao’s policies slavishly, Ho oversaw not only the extermination of significant portions of the population during the post-WWII period but also the base policies characteristic of Communist rule.⁸⁰ An eyewitness account of the use of terrorism and execution in the show-trials that commonly occurred during the time testified of the arbitrary viciousness in the emerging government of Ho Chi Minh:

Next they began Land Reform in the villages. The elimination of landowner was meant to begin the process of Communist collectivity of all land and labor. You weren’t a landlord because of the acreage you possessed or your way of life; anyone who wasn’t Communist was targeted. There were public trials and torture sessions that the Party forced the whole villages to attend. It turned into very vicious, what we would call kangaroo courts.

Peasants were forced into playing out retaliation against neighbors. For instance, if a father has been classified as a “landlord,” the cadre call in the children. If the eldest is a girl with younger brothers and sisters, she is told, ‘If you do not denounce your father, you will be classified as a landlord, too. But if you publicly denounce your father and say the he raped you, you can stay home to take care of your brothers and sisters.’ To save the rest of the family, she was obliged to go along. It was like a stage drama, orchestrated by the Party. Peasants and landowners had to play roles like in the theater.

I witnessed some of these rallies in villages in the resistance zone. The rallies were held at night because during the day we feared the French airplanes. Hundreds of people would be marched into an area the size of a football field, usually hidden by a hill. Surrounded by a circle of bamboo torches, the flames and clouds of smoke resembled temple paintings of Buddhist hell. The tribune had two wooden stages, one for the accused and a presidium for seven judges, all poor peasants. Among them was a police chief, usually a woman.

The tribune was lit by bicycle-powered generators. The people pumping the bicycles were behind the tribune’s rear screen. Also behind the screen were Land Reform cadre, who directed and coached the judges in a low voice. Very often they were accompanied by Chinese advisors dressed in Vietnamese clothing, who helped to structure this program according to Mao’s model. Each tribunal would last two or three nights. . . . On top of the tribunal stood three portraits: Ho Chi Minh in the middle flanked by the Soviet Malenkov and Mao. Placards were posted with slogans like: ‘Down with traitorous reactionary landlords.’ And, ‘Let us give the masses a free hand in their struggle.’

At first the accused is only denounced with minor crimes of exploitation. If the victim denies this, the next night he is accused of bigger crimes by neighbors or relatives—rape or murder. If he does not confess, on the third night his is accused of serving French intelligence. That is treason to the country, which means death.⁸¹

“The Franco-Vietminh War and Forward”



French Foreign Legion unit patrols in a Communist held area

Even the outbreak of the Franco-Vietminh War in 1946 did not deter the continued efforts of the Vietnamese Communists to purge society. Ho Chi Minh called this “building while fighting,”⁸² a tactic that allowed the Communists to recreate the social structure of occupied areas so that the populace would be favorable toward the Vietnamese Communists and their agenda. The fact that they pursued this policy even under the difficult circumstances of fighting against the French, using precious resources and manpower, indicated clearly that these Marxist revolutionaries could not have succeeded if left to popular support alone.

But Ho Chi Minh did not have to fabricate problems during the post-World War II era in order to succeed. He needed only to manipulate them again as he had in the past, and thereby achieve his strategic goals through the war with France. The return of French colonial authorities after World War II had inflamed rapidly popular hatred of the old colonial system, raising cries for independence throughout Indochina. Racial antipathies among the Vietnamese boiled over as more recent abuses by the French stirred up past memories, creating the revolutionary passions that aided Ho Chi Minh's movement.⁸³

The short period of peace between the France and the new revolutionary government died a quick death, struck down by the French colonial regime which reasserted its authority and its aggression in relationship to that growing retrenchment of power. Ho, who awaited such an opportune moment for action, described this time as follows:

However, the French colonialists still dreamed of the possibility of reestablishing their oppressive regime in our country. They regarded our peaceful attitude as a weakness. Encouraged by the British-American reactionary forces and in collusion with the Chiang Kai-shek clique, on September 23, 1945, they attacked the Vietnamese people in Saigon, then sought to penetrate the North. Afterwards, trampling on what they had pledged in the Preliminary Agreement of March 6, 1946, and the modus vivendi of September 14, 1946, the colonialists perpetrated a massacre in Haiphong, occupied Lang Son, and staged repeated provocations until December 19, when the Resistance War of our entire people against the invaders began.⁸⁴

The French, weary from fighting in World War II, exhausted financially and emotionally from that conflict, foundered before the determination and elusiveness of Ho's Vietminh. Its "protracted war" strategy gained valuable time for developing the Democratic Republic of Vietnam's military power, for recruitment and "education" of the Vietnamese people, and, by the beginning of the 1950s, even for the achievement of superiority in forces.⁸⁵ Though Ho's troops were not many, and had suffered many hardships and heavy losses in human wave assaults

against fortified French positions, these revolutionaries were persistent--adroitly fighting a guerrilla war that offset French advantages in firepower.

In *Some Aspects of Guerrilla Warfare in Vietnam*, Vietnamese Communist author Hoang Van Thai described the clever use of guerrilla tactics that typified this war whereby “the weak can defeat the strong.” In one episode from this source, the ingenuity of the Vietminh involved a clever diversion using a most unlikely subject—a frog. French soldiers frantically firing their weapons into the night later found the following:

What actually had occurred? The people’s militia of Haiduong had devised a stratagem to harass the enemy. They had introduced a small ball of tobacco into the mouth of a toad whose jaws they bound together. The animal was then hung at the barbed wire fences at a late hour. With an irritated throat, it coughed just like a man.

The experience was afterwards popularized among the guerrillas of other districts so much so that raising [frogs] became a special trade occupation in several villages.⁸⁶

Thus undeterred by the crude appearances and the lack of sophisticated arms of their comrades, many within the ranks of the Vietminh still believed in the Party’s proverb regarding the certainty of victory and a better future: “True, it is today a grasshopper kicking an elephant, but tomorrow the elephant will have its bowels plucked out.”⁸⁷

Indeed the patience of “the grasshopper” was not without merit. In 1949, Mao Zedong’s Communist forces in China deposed the Nationalist Chinese and poured aid and advisers into Vietnam, tipping the balance of power in favor of the Vietminh over the French. The amount of aid and logistical support given by Mao’s China “linked Vietnam to the Communist world” and produced a qualitative change and not just a quantitative one for the Vietminh. Later, the end of the Korean War in 1953 allowed the People’s Republic of China to redirect its energies from that conflict and supply even more help to Ho’s army. The Vietnamese Communist recognized this

strategic advantage, exploited it, and considered it pivotal to their success.⁸⁸ The prophesied time for “leaping” had come to the Vietminh.

Subsequently, the Communist forces under Ho accelerated their offensive operations and penetrated further into Laos and Cambodia. Indochina was inflamed in war and Communist revolutionary work.⁸⁹ By that time Indochina’s strident revolutionary had gained much experience and organizational success. The task at hand therefore called for building on past successes in new circumstances, and drawing upon popular passions and the power of an ubiquitous insurgent apparatus.

By the 1950s Ho had accomplished that very feat and had developed his revolutionary work throughout Indochina, moving his forces with relative ease in Laos and Cambodia. Both the Pathet Lao and the Khmer Rouge, the Communist revolutionary groups respectively of these two Southeast Asian neighbors of Vietnam, grew in potency as well as numbers and therefore increasingly assisted the insurgency in Vietnam. The minimally important trails that linked Vietnam with Laos and Cambodia grew in number and complexity as Ho’s cadre remembered their mentor’s words nearly a decade earlier: “Do you understand that communications are a life-and-death matter?”⁹⁰

Throughout his life, Ho Chi Minh urged the further development of the region for operational, logistic, and offensive purposes.⁹¹ Lt. Gen. Sak Sutsakhan described these ominous events in his country of Cambodia during the Franco-Vietminh War:

The Viet Minh troops in Cambodia continued to expand gradually as the political and military situation of the regime in power deteriorated. Under the pretext of bringing military assistance for independence in Cambodia, these Viet Minh forces established themselves more and more deeply in Cambodia. Their method was to move into certain frontier regions to facilitate taking over particular areas in the interior of Cambodia just before the signing of the Geneva agreements in 1954. These areas of Viet Minh control were then expanded according to the ‘oil spot’ or ‘leopard spot’ concept.⁹²

In addition to the vital logistic systems created in these parts, the Vietnamese Communists operated in coordination with these other Communist organizations and benefitted much from their support. During the Franco-Vietminh War Ho achieved operational unity with Laotian and Cambodian Communist forces, a unity that was cemented in formal agreements between parties.⁹³

Subsequently in 1953 Air Force Colonel Edward Lansdale remarked that the Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese operated together during a military offensive against the French that he observed first hand. Although Lansdale took careful note of this coordination of Communist forces, he was struck by another fact: the Communists were using the drug trade to fund their military operations. The daring Colonel recalled:

Some memories of my Indochina visit have stuck with me. There was the hasty trip to a foreign legion outpost on the Plaine des Jarres in Laos to observe a sudden Vietminh invasion of the area—only to discover that the Communist invasion had been called off when the French preclusively bought up the opium crop in the region and thus denied it to the enemy. Ever since, I have noted wryly how Communist military forces of the North Vietnamese or Pathet Lao become most active in that region every year at opium harvest time. The opium now pays for many of their battalions and divisions.⁹⁴

Ho Chi Minh's strategy in Indochina during the Franco-Vietminh War involved more than just Communist internationalism (augmented by China), communications (logistics), and military operations (joint operations with other Communist military forces). The Indochina strategy included the creation of international political leverage as well, the very beginning of strategies that later became staples of the Vietnamese Communist diet of political-military warfare against the United States.

Throughout the conflicts with France and later the United States, Ho and his Communist supporters gained international support by repeatedly asserting the false notion that the

“imperialists” were “expanding” the war in Southeast Asia. As French forces, and later United States military forces, fought against the coordinated attacks of Communist insurgents in the region, whether in Laos or Cambodia, Ho and his followers announced to the world that the aggression was “escalating” because the enemy had violated the neutrality or rights of Cambodia and Laos.⁹⁵

Ho and his followers often used this notion of “escalation” and “expansion” of the war in Indochina, along with false notions of “neutrality,” as pretexts to weaken popular support in France and the United States for war and to safeguard the strategic advantage of the Communist forces, which Ho depicted as “liberators.”⁹⁶ In 1970 this Party propaganda reached deeply into the psyche of young Americans who reacted emotionally and sometimes violently to President Richard Nixon’s decision to eliminate North Vietnam’s sanctuaries and supplies in Cambodia.

But Ho Chi Minh’s strategic considerations also included a wide exploitation of the international politics of the time and not just a linkage between international politics and regional politics in Laos and Cambodia. His ability to ride the success of the victory of the People’s Republic of China was only the beginning of a strategy that exploited the changing “balance of power” and the ascension of new power sources. As he walked through the revolutionary stages of development and the decades that followed, Ho increasingly courted Communist support from around the globe and beyond his earliest backers--Soviet Russia, Communist China, and the French Communist Party--taking advantage of the creeping power of Moscow’s and Peking’s internationalism and the birth of new Communist states.

Ho later received delegations from the Communist parties in Cuba, Angola, India, Yugoslavia, Mongolia and other parts of the Marxist world, finding propaganda and material

benefits in these relationships.⁹⁷ Ho Chi Minh praised them for their support and, in turn, pledged his country's support for international Communism and their particular "struggle."⁹⁸

Ho, ever mindful that a good Communist must show gratitude to the father and not just his children, assured Moscow that the socialist revolution worldwide owed its highest regards to its leader, the Soviet Union. He declared: "The Democratic republic of Viet-Nam is a member of the big socialist family headed by the great Soviet Union. It is our duty to defend the advance post of socialism in Southeast Asia, to endeavor to contribute to the strengthening of the forces of the socialist camp, and to safeguard peace in Southeast Asia and the world"⁹⁹ The reception of Bloc aid therefore cemented Ho's movement to international Communism, making him a debtor as well as a creditor in revolutionary assets.

Ho not only courted these various Communist parties around the globe but also threatened to use their soldiers as well. Yet another potent political weapons that he held was the implicit and explicit threat of escalating the war and turning it into a global war that directly involved the Soviet Union, Communist China, and other Communist countries. Ho's repeated rhetoric supporting notions of an eventual global triumph of Marxism over capitalism, coupled with his alliance with China whose threats against Southeast Asian states were vehement, fell not open deaf ears in the West.¹⁰⁰

Although Ho's rattling of the "Hammer and Sickle" was quieter at first, and later far more vehement in tone as he voiced his militancy with words such as "the Cuban people are ready to give even their blood [for our cause]," these threats deeply disturbed Western security assessments.¹⁰¹ Such a geo-political scenario was troubling to Paris, but far more for Washington in 1949 as Moscow acquired nuclear weapons and thus crashed the nuclear club as an unwanted guest determined to defy the gentlemen's rules of conduct.

All the presidents who led the American war effort in Vietnam, from President Harry Truman to President Richard Nixon, therefore strove to limit the war there and to keep that conflict from tying down too many American troops.¹⁰² Playing to these strategic concerns, and hoping to paralyze American military efforts, Ho later asserted against the United States:

The United States has a big economic and military potential. To defeat such an enemy, we first of all rely on our own strength, and at the same time strive to win the most effective international assistance. The assistance support given us by the brotherly socialist countries are particularly valuable. Hundreds of thousands of volunteers from the socialist countries and other countries have declared their readiness to fight the U.S. imperialists by our side. We warmly thank them for their militant solidarity with us. When necessary, we will appeal to them.¹⁰³

While remaining firmly committed to his “comrades” he simultaneously courted sympathizers from all regions of the world and all ranks of life. In fact, Ho rarely missed a public opportunity for calling attention to his sympathizers, “progressive peoples” around the world, praising them and acknowledging their importance in the struggle against “imperialist aggression.” Both Ho and Pham Van Dong considered this element to be essential to their victory and a major aspect over their revolutionary strategy.¹⁰⁴

And logically so, Ho Chi Minh and his followers gained much comfort and recognition from the support of non-Communists around the world--including many Americans who later praised his revolution. In 1954 Ho remarked about this early support: “This internationalism is invaluable. It encouraged us through the trying days of our Resistance. It will help us to build a lasting peace. The ever-growing movement of peace and democracy in the world was conducive to our victory.”¹⁰⁵

This encouragement from abroad during the Franco-Vietminh War period foreshadowed the American anti-war movement of the 1960s and early 1970s. Ho masterfully targeted the French and American masses, media, malcontents, and militaries, stirring the doubts, debates,

and debacles that reached well into the corridors of Paris and Washington, where leaders echoed propaganda conceived in minds that despised Western security and freedom. The scraggily-bearded hippie wearing peace signs, the strait-laced appearing professor delivering campus speeches opposing the “immoral” war against Vietnam’s “peasant nationalists,” and the agitated mother inadvertently berating the leadership of freedom against Communist tyranny--all figures who became historical background to memories of an era past--served the calculated interests of a mind whose wits conceived of a revolution that carried weapons far beyond the hefty crates of newly minted Chinese and Soviet AK-47s later dropped in mass on the musty docks of North Vietnam.

Moreover, if Ho Chi Minh could not gain the open support of some groups or countries for the war against France, and later the war against the United States, at the very least he “won assurance that they would keep a neutral attitude towards that struggle.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently, during the 1950s Ho Chi Minh traveled to India and Burma and sought political advantages there. He similarly received official visits from these states as well as Indonesia, represented by President Sukarno.

But the DRV’s international relations were surely not a “one man show” resting on Ho’s efforts alone. Ever ready to shake an extended hand, on May 29, 1955 Pham Van Dong attended the Bandung Conference in Indonesia, which was not only a major international conference but also the beginning of a major international movement that hosted participants of the Non-Aligned Movement and articulated concepts of neutrality and “peace” that were favorable to Communist ambitions.¹⁰⁷ Pham’s courting of “neutral” countries not only attained Ho’s earlier objective of keeping political powers from supporting the West’s containment policy, but also his diplomatic efforts fostered the political inertia that allowed the DRV to cultivate regional

Communism--or to paraphrase the words of President John F. Kennedy, “to allow the tiger to fill its belly with those who attempted to ride its back.”¹⁰⁸



Ho Chi Minh and his General Staff at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu

The end of the Franco-Vietminh War came in 1954 at the Battle of Dien Bien Phu. General Henri Navarre, who assumed command of the French expeditionary forces in April 1953, gambled that the Vietminh could be drawn into the open at Dien Bien Phu--a strategic point of supplies and westward deployment for the DRV's military--and massacred by his superiority in firepower. Navarre, determined to win a decisive battle and reestablish the cause both in Vietnam and at home, underestimated the logistical abilities of the Vietminh as well as their determination to deploy artillery on the surrounding heights of the French position there.¹⁰⁹

The Vietminh's logistical accomplishments achieved in deployment of artillery and troops through the difficult terrain and the potency of rival weaponry remain a centerpiece of the history of this battle--and a proud record in Hanoi's military annals. These artillery weapons battered “the enemy” and in March destroyed the airfields connecting their supplies and

reinforcements.¹¹⁰ General Vo Nguyen Giap, who commanded the Vietminh, summed up the ferocity of the DRV's assaults when he asserted pointedly: "We decided to take the enemy by the throat at Dien Bien Phu."¹¹¹

The defeat of France at Dien Bien Phu on May 7th had a devastating effect on the will of the government and people of that crumbling colonial empire. Even though the Vietminh had suffered terrible casualties, the victory for Ho Chi Minh at Dien Bien Phu had been an unquestioned triumph of international Communism—and yet one exaggerated well out of proportion to its reality. But France lacked the will, the popular support at home, and the finances to continue the struggle alone and to achieve victory.¹¹²

French colonialism had been defeated in Vietnam, and not many Americans shed a tear for the defeat of that system.¹¹³ But the victory was not one of nationalism over colonialism. Ho Chi Minh had clearly shown by his actions as well as his words that his revolution would continue to serve the interests of international Communism. The battle shifted next to the negotiation table at Geneva, Switzerland where the fate of Vietnam awaited the decisions of the United States, China, the Soviet Union, and to a lesser degree France and the Democratic Republic of Vietnam.

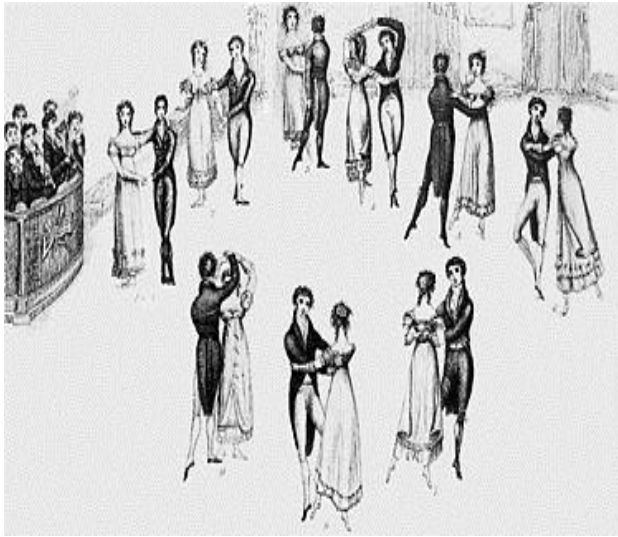
With 20,000 to 30,000 Chinese Communist military advisers in Vietnam, Soviet aid and supplies pouring into Ho's occupied territory along with advisers from that sponsor, and his demonstrated and passionate resolve to export "peoples' wars" throughout the region, the preponderance of power was indeed in the hands of those who believed that "power began at the end of the barrel of a gun."¹¹⁴ Moreover, the Vietminh had invaded Laos and Cambodia and remained there against the wishes of these countries. At this point in time, the United States found that it could no longer just debate the methods and measures of intervention,¹¹⁵ or rely

simply on aiding its allies with military advice and supplies, but had to contain Communism and also uproot it by supporting directly the Vietnamese and Indochinese nationalists who sought freedom for their lands.

There was no turning back at this point. Washington was determined to fight a survival war against a contagion that resisted the conventional curatives of reason and diplomacy. Thus the stakes were far greater than local conflicts or “civil wars” in Vietnam or Southeast Asia. With mass killings, political intrigue, enslavement of entire populations, and the degradation of human life, all expanding against the determination of developing states, the bamboo curtain drawn from strings reaching as far as Moscow and Peking threatened to close upon Indochinese lands that had fought to see the daylight of independence and freedom magnified through leaders far closer to heart and home.

Chapter 3

The Geneva Waltz and a Familiar Tune (The Geneva Conference of 1954)



Ballroom Etiquette

During the early 19th century the fashionable elite of Europe first encountered a new dance in their ballrooms called “the waltz.” Historians have noted the interesting fact that these lovers of etiquette and sophisticated entertainment recoiled at that dance’s explosive starts, its propulsive beat, its whirling movement of partners who held each other and touched as if in an embrace. But historians also have recorded that these Europeans quickly became familiar with the new beat and steps of the waltz—and later tamed its pace while introducing it into ballrooms around that continent as an elegant partner dance. The waltz is now a familiar tune in many parts of the world.

CHRONOLOGY

Jan. 25-Feb. 18, 1954. Berlin Conference failure. The United States and the Soviet Union failed to reach an agreement on Cold War issues in Korea, Indochina, and Europe.

April 26, 1954. The Geneva Conference began. Communist bloc representatives and Western Free World representatives debated the fate of Korea and Indochina.

May 7, 1954. French defeated at Battle of Dien Bien Phu.

June 1954. Ho Chi Minh and his Viet Minh planned to continue political subversion of the South and to use a negotiated cease-fire at Geneva to consolidate forces for a later insurgency against the same.

June 1954. The United States established a CIA military mission in Saigon to resist Communism and to aid Vietnamese nationalists.

July 21, 1954. The Geneva Conference ended with a vague settlement and an agreement to a cease-fire.

August-September 1954. North Vietnam immediately pressed its agenda to further infiltrate the South and to establish a stronger revolutionary base there. United States established the eight-nation SEATO treaty for the collective security of Southeast Asia.

In order to “enter the ballroom” of the subject of the Geneva Conference of 1954-- understanding the essence of that event--students of history should likewise carefully listen to “the tune of the music” played there and become familiar with the “steps.” The Communists had played this tune over and over again, orchestrating the energies of political aggression against the free and developing world, and thus had sounded the notes that were recognizable to all those who chose to listen. No matter how elegantly the Communist bloc danced its diplomatic waltz at Geneva, the background music set the beat for yet another insurgency that would later trouble all of South Vietnam. Fortunately for the United States, there were many policymakers within its government ranks who understood not only the music but also the dancers who waltzed in harmony with that familiar tune.

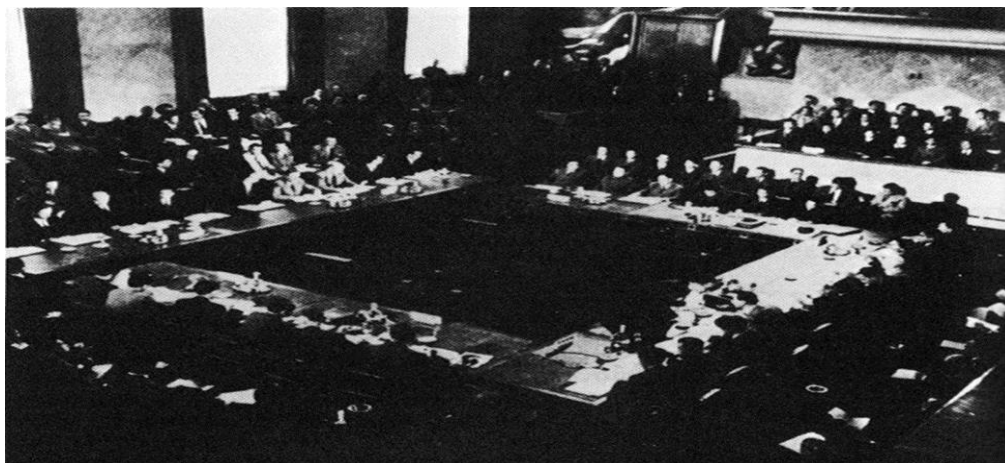
However, there are many historians today who refuse to listen to the tune of the “Geneva Waltz” and therefore misunderstand the subject. These scholars have made the subject of the Geneva Conference one of the more maligned sub-topics of the history of the Vietnam War. So many falsehoods underpin the “mainstream” studies of this period, 1954-1956, that it would be distracting to the reader if all the errors were addressed in this chapter; therefore this chapter will emphasize the critical developments of that time and several of the major notions that have detracted from an accurate assessment of Geneva. The studies that have asserted that the United States attempted to obstruct a negotiated peace, missed opportunities to engage the Chinese Communists and the Vietnamese Communists, and then later undermined the elections and agreements of Geneva not only have misconstrued the facts but also have accused the wrong side of aggression.

Those who seek a basic understanding of the subject of the Geneva Conference of 1954 should note the following “ballroom etiquette.”

1. The Vietnamese Communists, according to their own historical accounts and documents, admit that they never sought at Geneva a compromised solution or peace that included the acceptance of a non-Communist government in South Vietnam or Indochina.

2. Communist political ideology embraced by Ho Chi Minh and his Vietnamese supporters indicated that they accepted a cease-fire at Geneva only to buy time in order to consolidate their forces and gain a strategic advantage for a later drive to annex South Vietnam and to destroy all the non-Communist regimes in the region of Indochina. Thus while Pham Van Dong parlayed at Geneva on behalf of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), he and his associates concurrently worked to violate the very pledges made at this historic conference.

3. Hanoi’s aggression against South Vietnam (and its American ally) during and after the Geneva Conference of 1954 stemmed not from any failure on the part of the allies or Free World—a wrong or an injustice, a cruelty or a failure to negotiate--but from the mere fact that the Saigon government was not under the control of the Communists in Hanoi and therefore must be eliminated.



The Geneva Conference, 1954

Geneva Negotiations and Agreement:
“A Beautiful Dance Hall, Reluctant Dance Partners, and the Belle of the Ball”

In 1954 the beautiful city of Geneva, Switzerland, with its many narrow streets, old quarter, lovely parks, majestic cathedrals, and quaint squares, became the backdrop of the Geneva Conference. The scenic atmosphere of that city and the warmth of its citizens posed a contrasting if not ironic atmosphere to the hostilities of the participants there. British Ambassador Anthony Eden and Soviet Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov both co-chaired the gathering and conducted their business with all the courtesies and the formalities commonly associated with such a grand meeting of East and West. But antagonisms ensuing from the clashing ideals of opposite political worlds preceded, permeated, and postdated the conference, marking the moment as just another chill in Cold War history.¹

“Fighting while negotiating” was not merely a slogan of the Communist parties involved at the conference,² for the fields of Indochina were fertilized with the blood of Communist and French combatants and had not found yet the brief respite in hostilities that Geneva would bring—the armistice that shifted the thrust of Red aggressions mainly to the diplomatic and political (subversive) realms. Moreover, the Korean War had recently ended in 1953 with a cease-fire

agreement that many doubted would last very long. Both these subjects—Indochina and Korea—remained the chief topics of discussion and the stated purpose for negotiations at the conference.³

The participants of the Geneva conference included all major parties of the conflict in Indochina, although not all sides attended “officially,” some choosing to observe the proceedings and await the outcomes. Vietnamese nationalists under Bao Dai opposed Pham Van Dong, who represented Ho Chi Minh’s Communists. The delegation from Laos represented the Royal Lao Government, which rejected the ideology and the tactics of its nemesis, the obscure but menacing Pathet Lao, who had the full support of the Communist Vietnamese and allegedly the best interests of the people of Laos at heart. The Cambodian delegations likewise had their opposing sides: the Royal Government of Cambodia, which (like the Royal Lao Government) claimed legitimacy through popular support and a hard-earned independence from France, stood against the Khmer Rouge, yet another marginal Communist group seeking legitimacy for its “democratic” cause.⁴

The major world powers also made their presence known at Geneva. France, Great Britain, and the United States represented Western interests. The United States delegation, however, attended with the unique distinction of “observer,” not bound by the outcomes of the conference (a position that will be explored later in this chapter). The People’s Republic of China, though not recognized officially by the United States, played a major role at the conference. The Soviet Union led the Communist camp there and had the full support of “Red China.”⁵

Many citizens of the world over hoped that the new Soviet leaders who succeeded Joseph Stalin, men like Nikita Khrushchev, Georgy Malenkov, and Vyacheslav Molotov, would bring to Geneva a fresh perspective, a lessening of Cold War tensions and the possibilities of nuclear

war.⁶ The gruff Khrushchev had punctuated his many speeches in the mid-1950s with words calling for peace and cooperation with the West but he behaved to the contrary. Therefore “peaceful coexistence,” Khrushchev’s policy for the Free World, did not mitigate hostilities toward the capitalist camp or bring about a renunciation of war and subversion as a means to spread Communism. Instead his new policy brought a redoubling of aggressive activities toward “weak spots” in the Third World, particularly East Asia, and a greater reliance on the tactics of economic aid, propaganda, subversion, and “wars of national liberation.”⁷

These wars of national liberation were proxy wars fought “on the cheap” in developing nations and backed by the Soviet Union and China. Despite the rhetoric of peace and coexistence, the Soviets and their supporters continued to back Communist revolutions around the globe. Regarding East Asia at the time, Secretary of State John Foster Dulles noted that “the whole area from Japan and Korea to Southeast Asia is troubled by Communist efforts and penetration.”⁸

However, shorn from Communist strategy under Khrushchev was the reliance on overt aggression, the use of threats, and the assertion that war with the United States was inevitable—policies and practices that had alienated many people around the world from the Communist movement. But what did all this mean for American security and interests? During a speech to the American Association of Newspaper Editors in 1956 President Dwight Eisenhower described the new Communist strategy succinctly:

Why was there such a sudden change in the Soviet policy? Their basic aim is to conquer the world, through revolution if possible, but in any way. Anyone that has read any of their books knows that their doctrine is lies, deceit, subversion, war if necessary, but in any way: conquer the world. And that has not changed.

But they have changed their policies markedly. They were depending on force and the threat of force only. And suddenly they have gone into an entirely different attitude. They are going into the economic and political fields and are

really wearing smiles around the world instead of some of the bitter faces to which we have become accustomed.⁹

The Soviet strategy at Geneva therefore sought to achieve the usual Marxist-Leninist outcomes but with more reliance on diplomacy and political means: “the peace strategy.” Soviet objectives at Geneva included: creation of satellites and pro-Soviet regimes; legitimization of Communist groups and authorities, particularly China, and later the Pathet Lao and the Khmer Rouge; dividing allied unity, thus weakening American power and forcing more use of its resources—a dispersion of U.S. power.¹⁰ The Soviet Union also sought to use the peace strategy to discredit the United States before its allies and the world as American leaders resisted these diplomatic tactics of the Kremlin.

Moreover, Soviet grand strategy, similar to that of the Chinese which emerged in the 1960s, sought to entice Washington to disperse its military and economic power around the world, causing the United States to overextend its resources while fighting against the many wars of national liberation that emerged in East Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the Middle East.¹¹ A negotiated “peace” at Geneva would allow the Soviets to achieve a major victory in its grand strategy as the Vietnamese Communists consolidated their forces, broadened their political-military activities throughout the region, and gained international legitimacy through the Geneva Agreement.

But the acquisition of French concessions remained among the primary immediate objectives of the Soviets at Geneva, who hoped to divide the Western alliance.¹² The Kremlin was troubled by geopolitical setbacks in Europe that undermined the ideological strength of the Soviet empire. The Marshall Plan and the North Atlantic Treaty Alliance (NATO) alliance had allowed Western Europe to gain the economic and military strength to offset Soviet ambitions in that region.¹³

The nuclear superiority of the United States over the Soviet Union not only checked its advantage in conventional military forces but also allowed the economics and the ideals of Western Europeans in the capitalist camp to challenge the very driving notions of international Communism: an inevitable if not rapid Communist victory; and the superiority of Communism over capitalism. The unrest among Soviet satellite countries in Eastern Europe during the era testified to the failure of Communist ideology as well as the limits of the Kremlin's power.¹⁴

However, if France could be wooed away from the Western alliance and the emerging European Defense Community, Kremlin strategists theorized, Moscow could gain a significant political victory in the Europe. The possibility of Communist control of the extensive French economic holdings in Vietnam acted as "bait and line" to draw the French toward concessions.¹⁵ Consequently, the French hoped that the Soviets would pressure Ho Chi Minh's government to put some slack on that line and allow a degree of French influence in Vietnam.

The Chinese delegations, led by Zhou Enlai, entered the Geneva Conference with a legacy of bitter hostility against the United States that American leaders would not allow to pass there without notice. If the Chinese leaders had not pressed their anti-American propaganda so openly and hatefully--and on such a grand (and international) scale--there may have been more opportunities for China to gain the international respectability that it craved at Geneva and afterward.¹⁶ Zhou was able to hide his agenda well at the conference but not his hatred for the United States, a hatred that was visible for all to see. The dignified Eden remarked about this bellicose attitude: "He was cold and bitterly anti-American, and my first interview with him at our villa was rigid and disagreeable. We sat grimly exchanging sharp acerbities. It was on this occasion that he brusquely rejected my proposal of a truce for the evacuation of wounded at Dien Bien Phu."¹⁷

Thus Peking had alienated the United States and then had to face “the paper tiger” at the conference. In one of the more dramatic and controversial moments at Geneva, Secretary Dulles refused to shake hands with Zhou En Lai, rejecting his hypocritical posturing and rebuffing his government’s anti-American invective.¹⁸ At the same time, Dulles and the American delegation remained committed to the position of non-recognition of China. He remarked:

In relation to Communist China, we are forced to take account of the fact that the Chinese Communist regime has been consistently and viciously hostile to the United States. A typical Chinese Communist pamphlet reads: ‘We Must Hate America, because She is the Chinese People's Implacable Enemy’; ‘We Must Despise America because it is a corrupt Imperialist Nation, the World Center of Reaction and Decadency’; ‘We Must Look down upon America because She is a Paper Tiger and Entirely Vulnerable to Defeat.’ By print, by radio, by drama, by pictures, with all the propaganda skills which Communism has devised, such themes are propagated by the Red rulers. They vent their hatred by barbarous acts, such as seizures and imprisonments of Americans. Those responsible for United States policy must ask and answer: “Will it help our country if, by recognition, we give increased prestige and influence to a regime that actively attacks our vital interests?” I can find only the answer ‘No.’¹⁹

However, the diplomatic hostilities between China and the United States at Geneva transcended personalities and words. Rabidly anti-American and anti-Western, the Chinese under Mao Zedong did not limit their hatred of the United States during the Geneva period to just verbal attacks on the United States and propaganda campaigns waged on the Chinese mainland. Chinese foreign policy objectives included much more than the alleged humble aim of protecting the Middle Kingdom’s “southern flank.” The People’s Republic of China lashed out at anything within its reach that was deemed to be a part of the capitalist world and American interests.²⁰

Most importantly, the Chinese under Mao backed without reservation the many Communist revolutions penetrating East Asia. Dulles again noted that fact:

On the China mainland 600 million people are ruled by the Chinese Communist Party. That party came to power by violence and, so far, has lived by violence. It

retains power not by will of the Chinese people but by massive, forcible repression. It fought the United Nations in Korea; it supported the Communist war in Indochina; it took Tibet by force. It fomented the Communist Huk rebellion in the Philippines and the Communists' insurrection in Malaya. It does not disguise its expansionist ambitions. It is bitterly hateful of the United States, which it considers a principal obstacle in the way of its path of conquest.²¹

Notwithstanding, during the Geneva negotiations both the Chinese Communist and Soviet Russians had much to gain from a pause in open hostilities with the United States and the Free World. Although China was committed to developing and to assisting Communist revolutions around the world and to gaining the status of a global superpower, the Red revolutionaries in Peking needed time to consolidate the fruits of their victory in mainland China (achieved in 1949), to overcome their failed economic policies (Five Year Plan), and to redevelop their military forces that had suffered heavy losses in the Korean War.²² Subsequently, Zhou courted the French and British diplomats at Geneva with duplicitous promises of free elections and majority rule (to chose the government in Vietnam), acceptance of the possibility of Vietnam under the French Union, and a cease-fire before a political settlement.²³



Zhou Enlai Arrives at Geneva, 1954

Likewise, the newly-chosen Soviet leader Khrushchev needed time to consolidate his control and to patch up domestic and foreign problems that his predecessor, Joseph Stalin, had created in Soviet Russia and the Communist bloc.²⁴ A cease-fire in Indochina would therefore provide the Communist bloc with much-needed time for consolidation of power while also allowing it to maintain its attack on capitalism through a shift in tactics to the political realm.

Among Communist allies at Geneva, there remained a significant obstacle to this plan for a pause in hostilities and redirection of aggressive tactics: Ho Chi Minh and his victorious Vietminh. France, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China agreed that a “solution” would entail an armistice, a regrouping of military forces to separate zones, and nation-wide elections to determine a legitimate government for Vietnam. These conditions, though allowing the Vietnamese Communists time to rebuild and to organize their forces and base of operations, would deny the Vietminh their tactical advantage in the field of battle and a complete military

victory over the French.²⁵ Although there was never a disagreement over aims—the destruction of “imperialism” in the region—the debate over methods was indeed intense among the Soviet Union and China, on one hand, and the Vietnamese Communist Party, on the other. The debate also penetrated deeply into Ho’s party insomuch that he had to settle the dispute with an official pronouncement.²⁶

Ho Chi Minh indeed found his comrades in Russia and China imposing their plan with little regard for the Vietminh’s military position in the field. The decision, forced on the Vietminh by their allies, remained a controversial point in North Vietnam’s relations with China and Russia throughout the duration of the “American War.” On November 17, 1968 an interesting conversation occurred between Chinese and North Vietnamese leaders as they reflected on the subject of the Geneva conference:

Mao Zedong: Why was the Geneva Conference convened? . . . In the past, I did say that we had made a mistake when we went to the Geneva conference in 1954. At that time, President Ho Chi Minh wasn’t totally satisfied. It was difficult for President Ho to give up the South, and now, when I think twice, I see that he was right. The mood of the people in the South at that time was rising high. Why did we have the Geneva conference? Perhaps, France wanted it.

Zhou Enlai: it was proposed by the Soviet Union. Khrushchev at that time was in power. And in January 1954, the Soviets wanted to solve the problem.

Mao Zedong: Now, I cannot remember the whole story. But I see that it would be better if the conference could have been delayed for one year, so the troops from the North could come down [to the South] and defeat [the enemy].

Pham Van Dong: At that time, we were fighting in the whole country, having no division between the North and the South.²⁷

Despite the hesitance to accept these terms, the Vietnamese Communists understood that unity with the Communist bloc was essential for victory in Indochina. These “reluctant dance partners” soon found the tune of aggression to be too irresistible to allow dissensions to ruin their “waltz.” Throughout the Geneva period, 1954-1956, Ho Chi Minh and Pham Van Dong

carefully followed the Moscow line and fostered further relations with Peking. China, having proved itself to be a war-winning factor with its military, political, and economic support, remained critical to Vietnamese Communist strategy and served as the “rear area” base that was essential for victory.²⁸

The victorious Vietminh leaders buttressed these demonstrations of solidarity with the Communist bloc with open declarations in support of Soviet Russia and Communist China—in addition to vituperative denunciations of the United States as “the chief enemy” and center of “world reaction” against progress of colonial peoples.²⁹ During the discussions at Geneva, the United States delegates lamented the lack of unity and resolve among its allies, an outcome that Pham Van Dong facilitated in obedience to his comrades in Moscow and Peking.

Although docile toward the Communist bloc, the Vietnamese Communist Party aggressively opposed the Free World. The Vietnamese Communists demonstrated a truculent attitude throughout the Geneva Conference that caught the attention of more than a few observers.³⁰ This political “posture” at the conference was characteristic of their diplomatic tactics and their tendency for grandstanding and for propagandizing—a posture often taken by other Communist groups during negotiations. Furthermore, notable American policymakers remarked that the Vietnamese Communists were simply stalling to further their battle field advantages.³¹

But Ho Chi Minh’s political strategy at Geneva involved far more calculation than just these usual tactics of Communism. “Uncle Ho” and his associates needed to create a public perception that validated their “independence” movement in contrast to French, American, Cambodian, and Laotian notions of independence, which all had succeeded in various degrees and therefore challenged the very ideals of the Vietnamese Communists.

The Vietnamese Communist Party, which had prioritized the political struggle over the military struggle,³² found that amid its military triumphs in the field was a very disturbing political development on its borders and in its very region: Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, Burma, Indonesia, and the Philippines had all gained independence or had made significant strides in that direction without the aid of the Communist world--and even with the direct support of the United States.³³ Some of these Southeast Asian states had coupled this political success with economic achievements, further discrediting the notion that Communism was essential for political and economic reform in developing countries. This geopolitical development posed one of the more significant challenges to Communist ideology and to the plans of the Vietnamese Communists, which sought to subjugate all of Indochina under Ho Chi Minh's control.

The fact that U.S. diplomats like Dulles emphasized America's anti-colonial policy and the achievements of this policy within Southeast Asia created further complications for the position of the Vietnamese Communists. The bold Secretary remarked during the period:

The United States, as the first colony of modern history to win independence for itself, instinctively shares the aspiration for liberty of all dependent and colonial peoples. We want to help, not hinder, the spread of liberty. We do not seek to perpetuate Western colonialism and we find even more intolerable the new imperialist colonialism of communism. That is the spirit that animates us. If we remain true to that spirit, we can face the future with confidence that we shall be in harmony with those moral forces which ultimately prevail.³⁴

American anti-colonial policies were evident also in the fact U.S. policymakers refused to create an anti-Communist alliance in Southeast Asia based on racial dominance by European powers but rather demanded among the Western allies that regional states be included in a cooperative security framework that responded to the invitation for help by the host country and that respected the territorial integrity of the same.³⁵



Pham Van Dong, 1954

With this problem in mind at the conference, Pham Van Dong, backed by the Soviets and “Chicoms” (Chinese Communists), attempted to seize the moment by using fiery speeches that portrayed the Vietnamese Communist Party as the patron of national independence movements in Indochina—as evidenced in the party’s support of Communist groups in the region.³⁶ Pham asserted firmly during the early stages of the conference that the Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge should be recognized as legitimate political parties and as leaders of their respective countries.³⁷ He built his case by extolling the “close association” of these groups with their peoples. He furthered noted that the legitimacy of the Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge rested upon popular support, economic achievement (“raising the living standards”), and political success achieved by freeing their people from colonialism and corrupt regimes.

Ho’s right-hand man noted at length:

The people of Indo-China, the people of Viet Nam as well as the people of Khmer and Pathet Lao are greatly concerned about the question of the cessation of hostilities and the re-establishment of peace in Indo-China. For a long time, the people of Khmer and Pathe Lao closely tied with the people of Viet Nam, fought for peace, independence and democracy. In the course of this struggle, the peoples of Khmer and Lao established the Government of resistance of Khmer

and Lao. Under the leadership of these Governments of resistance of the peoples of Khmer and Pathet Lao, the peoples of Khmer and Pathet Lao have liberated vast areas of their national territory. The Governments of resistance have exerted all their efforts in creating a democratic Power and in raising the living standard of the population in liberated areas, and they enjoy support and warm affection of the population in liberated areas, and they enjoy great prestige and influence among the population of both countries. These government represent the great majority of the people of Khmer and Laos, the aspirations of whom they symbolize.³⁸

But Pham Van Dong's declarations did not go unchallenged at Geneva. Representatives of the Royal Lao government presented perhaps the most direct and salient attack upon the false assumptions and aggressive ideology that lied at the heart of Vietnamese Communism. On May 8, 1954 Phoui Sananikone, who lead the Royal Laotian Delegation, countered Pham Van Dong's propaganda and asserted firmly that the Royal Lao government, not the Pathet Lao, had been elected by the Laotian people and continued to govern with their support.³⁹ He further noted the duplicitous nature of the Pathet Lao, who had participated in the elections and had worked later against it.

Phoui concluded his speech by strongly rebuking the assertion of the Vietnamese Communists that the Pathet Lao represented the people of Laos. The Laotian leader wanted these allegations to be dismissed as ludicrous. He remarked: "This so-called Pathet Lao represents absolutely nothing. It would be almost comic to recognize him [Prince Souphanugvong] as representing anybody. If that were done, all local leaders and party leaders and leaders of movements in all countries would consider they had the right to form governments and represent states."⁴⁰

Phoui Sananikone's remarks underscored the foundational issues at Geneva and the obstacles that lied ahead. The people of Southeast Asia, according to Phoui, faced a menacing threat from Communist parties because of the fact that they acted against the popular will of the

people, who not only strove to achieve independence but also had achieved that very objective or had begun that process. Vietnamese Communism, moreover, arbitrarily and autocratically defined the issues that constituted political legitimacy and independence, without fear of breaking these definitions if it suited the immediate purposes and tactics of Communist authorities. Local Communist parties therefore represented not the will of the people but a militant perspective of a minority--backed by a foreign intrusive power--that destroyed the democratic achievements, aspirations, and progress of the peoples of Southeast Asia.⁴¹

Unmoved by Phoui's speech at Geneva, the Vietnamese Communists continued to oppose the nationalist movements throughout Indochina and particularly in Vietnam. Even before the conference had ended the extreme and dogmatic position of the Vietnamese Communist Party at Geneva, coupled with the support of the Communist World, had quashed the opportunity to achieve independence and progress for Vietnam by peaceful means. The Vietnamese people were thus deprived of the independence and freedom that Western diplomats made possible at the conference, and which found concrete form in the successful states of Southeast Asia-- nations that made significant strides in gaining total independence from the imperial powers. The refusal of the Vietminh to accept the political progress already achieved in the region, choosing instead its "international duties" and revolutionary agenda, left the task of Vietnam's independence and progress to the nationalists under lackadaisical Emperor Bao Dai and an emerging, energetic South Vietnamese leader known as Ngo Dinh Diem.⁴²

Despite the Communist challenge to Vietnam's independence, opportunities for freedom remained available to these Vietnamese nationalists. As the conference proceeded, French political power in Indochina waned as fast as its military power--particularly after the battle of

Dien Bien Phu and the fall of Prime Minister Joseph Laniel's administration—lessening the ability of Paris to dictate any conditions on the Vietnamese people.

Domestic unrest in France over the Indochina issue, a weakened post-World War II economy that limited French ambitions, and a strong world opinion which opposed Western imperialism, weighed heavily against the will and actions of stubborn French colonialists. Isolated by their refusal to internationalize the conflict as was done in the Korean War, and left with only the “American card”—the threat to the Communist Bloc that France would allow the United States to intervene in Indochina—these sons of Napoleon I witnessed the fading glory of their Republic in the rising chagrin of their imperial forces and in the rising nationalist sentiments of Indochina seeking an alternative to both French imperialism and Ho Chi Minh's Communism.⁴³

Although French authorities clutched onto their dying cause with a vehemence that reflected their desperation as much as their colonial greed, the end of French control of Vietnam was within sight for eager Vietnamese nationalists, who watched these epochal changes with care and readiness. Lam Quang Thi, a distinguished South Vietnamese general, noted in his memoirs about that period:

I knew that the fall of Dien Bien Phu was the beginning of the end of the French presence in Indochina. . . . I hoped that the Americans would step in to stop Communist expansion in Asia in accordance with the U.S. policy of ‘containment’ advocated by John Foster Dulles, secretary of state under President Eisenhower. Further, the French departure would mean true independence for our country. With the help of the Americans, we would have a good cause to fight for.⁴⁴

Colonel Edward Lansdale likewise understood that the decline of French power in Indochina was inevitable and imminent. He described the moment with vivid imagery and with his characteristic wit:

Their possessive attitude toward the Vietnamese remained as strong as ever, evoking strong French emotional responses whenever an American came near one of 'their' Vietnamese. The French High Command, still directing a war against the Vietminh, continued in tight control of Vietnamese nationalist military forces. There still were French officials throughout the Vietnamese government, giving advice in tones that sounded strangely like orders. A Swiss journalist said, 'The French are like a man giving up his mistress. He knows the affair is over, but he hates it when he sees his mistress ride by in the big car of a rich man she has just met.' I gathered that we Americans were the rich newcomers.⁴⁵

Moreover, during the Geneva Conference period, American diplomats applied political pressure on the French, facilitated their exodus from Indochina, and thus made the opportunity for the independence of Vietnam even more attainable. American diplomats had worked for years to grant independence for Vietnam, bolstering the hopes and the aspirations of many Vietnamese nationalists, who suffered such terrible persecutions under the Communists.⁴⁶

President Dwight Eisenhower, like his predecessor Harry S. Truman, had worked tirelessly and painstakingly at the task of gaining independence for Southeast Asia. "Ike" recorded in his memoirs the risks, frustrations, and energies exerted in the quest to make more Vietnamese understand that the opportunity for independence had finely arrived in Vietnam and that nationalism was an attractive alternative to Communism.⁴⁷

These efforts had gone unnoticed by far too many, he lamented, and did not reach the people of Vietnam quickly enough because they remained clouded by Communist propaganda on one hand, and French propaganda on the other--a propaganda that sought to save face and focus on saving what remained of French influence in the region. President Eisenhower noted:

The French government's statement issued at this time, so long and so tragically delayed, should have, by its wording, assured the world that the French were fighting for freedom and against Communist penetration. But the problem of achieving understanding and belief among the populations most affected was never completely solved.⁴⁸

Independence and freedom for Vietnam became truncated, however, available only in the South as the major participants of Geneva Conference agreed to divide Vietnam along the 17th parallel.⁴⁹ The Vietnamese Communists gained the North, “the lion’s share,” the part of Vietnam that held not only the majority of the population but also the industrial heartland and proximity to the People’s Republic of China—a strategic position that the Democratic Republic of Vietnam under Ho had fostered and had exploited with great care. The South, known as “the rice basket of Southeast Asia,” held out the hope of developing its nationalistic potential through not only its own energies but also through the support of the United States, which endeavored to “salvage” a victory from Geneva despite the implications of having a Communist foothold in Southeast Asia situated in the North.⁵⁰

But Ho Chi Minh would not tolerate independence and nationalism in half of Vietnam (or near its borders) during the Geneva period any more than he did a decade earlier when he ordered the massacre of the Vietnamese Nationalist Party and cooption of other nationalists under the Red banner.⁵¹ Nationalism and independence were not only anathema to the Vietnamese Communist Party because these ideologies opposed the propaganda images erected by the DRV but also because the victorious Viet Minh were ready to seize all of Vietnam and place it within the Communist orbit.

Ho Chi Minh’s leadership decisions during the Geneva conference period clearly indicated that he not only obstructed nationalism in the region but also that he redirected his Communist activities in order to subjugate the emerging South Vietnam under a totalitarian system that draped itself in the garb of “liberation.” The political aggressions of the Vietminh which struck South Vietnam followed the military aggressions of the battlefield in perfect stride, creating a continuous forward march that lost no momentum.⁵² Flush with victory at Dien Bien

Phu, Ho wasted no time during the Geneva conference and immediately targeted the South for reunification by political rather than military means. He declared:

Peace calls for an end to the war; and to end the war one must agree on a cease-fire. A cease-fire requires regrouping zones, that is, enemy troops should be regrouped in a zone with a view to their gradual withdrawal, and ours in another. We must secure a vast area where we would have ample means for building, consolidating and developing our forces so as to exert influence over other regions and thereby advance towards reunification. The setting up of regrouping zones does not mean partition of the country; it is a temporary measure leading to reunification. Owing to the delimitation and exchange of zones, some previously free areas will be temporarily occupied by the enemy; their inhabitants will be dissatisfied; some people might fall prey to discouragement and enemy deception. We should make it clear to our compatriots that the trials they are going to endure for the sake of the interests of the whole country, for the sake of our long-range interests, will be a cause for glory and will earn them the gratitude of the whole nation. We should keep everyone free from pessimism and negativism and urge all to continue a vigorous struggle for the complete withdrawal of French forces and for independence.⁵³

Ho Chi Minh's plans to conquer the South at that time demonstrated a depth and contrivance that belied the expressions of peace that Communist diplomats asserted firmly and often at Geneva.⁵⁴ For instance, the victorious Vietminh, moreover, had planned to accelerate their activities against the French during the conference and push deeply into the south, the stronghold of the French colonial regime. A North Vietnamese diplomat recalled:

While the Geneva Conference was going on, the military situation on the French side became worse and worse. As of May 11th, 1954, on a national scale, in coordination with the diplomatic struggle in Geneva, we intensified activity in all fields. The victorious troops in Dien Bien Phu regrouped and prepared for new tasks. Troops and the people would be mobilized to fight the enemy on various battlefields, particularly in the enemy rear.⁵⁵

In July 1954 as the Geneva Conference ended, Ho Chi Minh issued a "report" to the Vietnamese Communist Party that further advocated political struggle against the South and that revealed a comprehensive approach for that aim. The report asserted that the agreement to an armistice and to form regrouping zones did not constitute a lessening of aggressive activities

against the capitalist world, locally, regionally, and internationally. Ho's orders emphasized the need to continue subversive activities, the importance of diplomatic tact, the extension of "activities" to the realm of international diplomacy, and the necessity of supporting the Pathet Lao and Khmer Rouge.⁵⁶

The aforesaid quotes and official histories from the other side clearly indicate that the Vietminh contrived their insurgency against the South well before the outcomes at Geneva. Those historians who search for a grievance or for a provocation--before, during, or after the Geneva conference--that compelled the Vietnamese Communists to behave aggressively or to "react aggressively" are searching in vain. The Vietnamese Communist lead by Ho Chi Minh needed no catalyst other than the militant ideology and political aggression that they fostered among themselves. Leaders of the Vietnamese Communist Party sought instead to shape events according to well-planned notions that included the creation of a Communist Indochina as a base for further Marxist-Leninist revolutions in the region.⁵⁷

Riddled with paranoia, formulaic ideology, and self-deceiving lies, Hanoi's thinking produced an aggressiveness in their politico-military doctrine that deemed the destruction of Diem's infant regime to be essential for "socialist progress" and national security in North Vietnam. The Vietnamese Communists asserted subsequently that they would not renounce permanently "revolutionary tactics" and that no tolerance would be given to a rival political regime in the South.⁵⁸ Colonel Lansdale summed up the relationship between their ideology and actions well:

There was the prospect that the Communists would continue their role of conquest in the world, imprison yet more populations. Communist theoreticians had an *idée fixe* about expanding their revolution into other territories, including the United States, as a necessity for the successful birth of the utopian society they hoped would be established eventually. The fact that these theoreticians were like

little children believing a fairy tale, with simple faith in there being a happy ending after all the horror, was no consolation to those of us facing them.⁵⁹

Thus the steady march of Communism in Indochina continued uninterrupted during the Geneva Conference, where only a temporary shift in tactics from the military to the political field occurred. This temporary shift in tactics retained all the ferocity and animosities toward the Free World as had overt acts of aggression like the Soviet Russian blockade of Berlin or the North Korean invasion of South Korea. These tactics were characteristic of Communist political intrigue, which George F. Kennan warned, nearly a decade earlier, would accompany Soviet and Communist diplomacy. In 1947 he asserted in his famous treatise on Soviet activities, “Sources of Soviet Conduct”:

If the Soviet government occasionally set its signature to documents which would indicate the contrary, this is to be regarded as a tactical maneuver permissible in dealing with the enemy When there is something the Russians want from us, one or the other of these feature of their policy may be thrust temporarily into the background; and when that happens there will always be American who will leap forward with gleeful announcements that ‘the Russians have changed,’ and some who will even try to take credit for having brought about such ‘changes.’ But we should not be misled by tactical maneuvers.⁶⁰

Yet that shift in tactics at Geneva, a policy that allowed the Communist world to consolidate its forces for yet another revolutionary push into the free and developing world at a later time, became a major challenge to the interests of the United States. The implications of a Communist victory in Vietnam troubled many in Washington’s foreign policy community. Vietnam held important resources such as tin, rubber, and iron—as well as agricultural surpluses for Southeast Asia. Vietnam’s sea lanes and proximity to China could present a favorable geopolitical advantage for the Communist bloc as it sought to dominate economic regions and penetrate deeply into the weak states of mainland Asia. Moreover, there were psychological

factors: what message would the developing world receive from yet another Communist victory in a region that witnessed a shrinking Western presence?⁶¹



President Dwight Eisenhower and Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, 1956

Fortunately for the United States, its diplomatic leaders under President Eisenhower entered the conference with a realistic perspective of Communist tactics, a realism born from a careful assessment of patterns of behavior in previous negotiations with the Communist world. Indeed, by the time of the Geneva conference, Communist diplomatic tactics had become “a familiar tune” for many in Eisenhower’s administration.⁶²

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), the successor of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), cautioned Secretary Dulles about the dangers of negotiating with the Communists and further noted that an expansion of Vietnamese Communist activities would follow the conference⁶³ (a fact that proved true shortly thereafter). In addition to intelligence sources, past experiences with the Communists taught that agreements for peace--“coalition governments,” “free elections,” “cease-fires,” and “assurances” from the Communist world--were elusive, empty promises that were not “worth the paper it is written on unless it contains its own self-enforcing procedures.”⁶⁴

Secretary Dulles, however, needed no prodding from his intelligence sources. His ability to understand the tune and rhythm of Geneva made him without a doubt “the belle of the ball,” who could dance in step with the Communist world. His own dealings with the Soviets and the Chinese had taught many lessons in diplomacy, which he carried to Geneva with a certitude and understanding that the Free World needed during such a crisis moment. Dulles never lost sight of the fact that Communist aggression was the root of the problem.⁶⁵ He dismissed the overly optimistic opinions of some who proposed that the United States act on the promises of the Communist camp even though these promises had been without the guarantees to enforce them and had been broken in the past.

Immediately prior to the Geneva Conference, Dulles recalled the broken pledges made by Moscow and Peking, wisely marking these breaches as portents of future action. He stated at length:

The United States agreed to recognize the Soviet regime in 1933 relying on its promise, in the so-called Litvinov agreement, to avoid and prevent political action from Russia against our political or social order. We performed and granted recognition. But the promises we received were vain.

At Yalta, in February 1945, Britain and the United States gave sanction to the fact of dominant Soviet influence in Central Europe. They did so on the basis of a Soviet agreement that the peoples of liberated Europe would have the right 'to choose the form of Government under which they will live,' and that in Poland there would be 'free and unfettered elections as soon as possible.' But those promises we received were vain.

There was also a Yalta Agreement with reference to the Far East. The United States agreed to obtain for the Soviet Union control of Port Arthur, Dairen and the Manchurian Railroad. In exchange, the Soviet Union promised to support the National Government of China. This arrangement was consummated at Moscow in August 1945. Then the Soviet Government acquired from China the Manchurian assets that had been promised it. In return it gave a 30-year engagement 'to render to China moral support and aid in military supplies and other material resources, such support and aid to be entirely given to the National Government as the central government of China.'

Having gained what it wanted the Soviet Government then moved promptly to assist the Chinese Communist regime in its efforts to overthrow the National Government. It gave to the Chinese Communist forces vast stocks of military supplies and other material resources which it had promised to give entirely to the National Government.

In this matter again we gave performance. But the corresponding Communist promises proved vain.

Our experience with Chinese Communist promises is limited because we have with them only one agreement. That is the Korean Armistice. The United Nations Command has reported that the Communists have violated it 40 times. That only tells part of the story, for the basic violation is that the Swedish and Swiss members of the Supervisory Commission are denied an adequate opportunity to supervise the North and to detect Communist violations.

The United States recognizes that few nations have a record which is not marred by some violations of agreements. Also, we recognize that nothing human is immutable. Surely, there is nothing vindictive or implacable about the American people. Indeed, few people are as ready as we to forgive and forget. But it would be reckless for us to ignore the events of recent years which have filled our archives with vain promises. We are not in the market for more.

It is now the policy of the United States not to exchange United States performance for Communist promises.⁶⁶

The critics of Dulles are more than a few, scholars and reporters who often chide rather than praise his resistance of Communist diplomatic tactics.⁶⁷ Rather than resisting attempts to a

negotiated peace, Dulles resisted the chicanery and deception that permeated the entire talks at Geneva, not allowing the United States to be trapped by tactical maneuvers at the table or feigned statements of peace that masked aggression and called for concessions by the Free World.

Dulles' diplomacy at Geneva and during the Cold War rightly earned him the distinction of being one of America's more insightful Secretaries of State. His rejection of Communist tactics at Geneva was commendable in that his resistance aimed at establishing peace not thwarting it.⁶⁸

In 1958, during a period of intense criticism of the Secretary, President Eisenhower remarked about him to Soviet Ambassador Mikhail A. Menshikov:

. . . and I simply state this fact to you. That I have lived with this man for five years, and nowhere in the world is there a more dedicated, a more intelligent and more fair and honest negotiator than John Foster Dulles. Possibly because of his appearance, and I admit that he does not smile much in his negotiations, you have gotten the impression that he is an unusually hard negotiator. Secretary Dulles attended the Versailles Peace Treaty meeting and from that time on has been working in every way possible for world peace. He is a very experienced and capable man. I am sure, after you have had meetings with Secretary Dulles, that you will agree with what I tell you.⁶⁹

In fact, "the man who did not smile much" resisted the diplomatic tactics of the Communist bloc from the very beginning of the conference. Eisenhower's Secretary of State rejected the very notion of a need to hold the Geneva Conference because the Communists demonstrated absolutely no will to compromise but only a will to continue their revolutionary agenda by means of diplomacy. Dulles was wary that Geneva would only bring a shift of military fronts from Korea to Indochina, and thus be of little value.⁷⁰ He also criticized the stalling tactics and obstructionism of the Communist camp, particularly its attempt to divide the

allies. Finding these tactics so repulsive at Geneva, Dulles at one point broke participation in the conference and withdrew the U.S. delegates.

But perhaps his finest insight involved the ability to understand that a respite in fighting would only lead to further aggressions as the Vietnamese Communists consolidated their forces. He stated:

In all these conferences, we go into them realizing that the Communists have a pattern of their own, which they have applied in Germany, which they have applied in Korea, which they are applying now in Indochina. This means that they will hold on to what they have got and try to get us to accept a scheme whereby they can get some more. We keep on trying. But I do not call it a diplomatic defeat that we are not able to lead the Communists to give up, as long as they don't lead us to make any costly concession, which we do not intend to make. . . . [I]t is the same pattern that has been applied in the past in Germany, Austria, and Korea; namely, to compel a withdrawal of the forces which sustain a free society and to set up a system under which the Communists can grab the whole area.⁷¹

Dulles had yet other reasons to reject Communist diplomacy at Geneva. Echoing the sentiments of his Commander-in-Chief, he underscored humanitarian reasons for resisting a negotiated settlement that allowed the Communist Vietnamese to take North Vietnam. Both men argued that in addition to the threat of continued aggression the consolidation of Communist power in the north would lead to a humanitarian crisis and the enslavement of millions of Vietnamese.⁷² By the time of the Geneva conference, North Korea and the Soviet satellite states of Eastern Europe had just demonstrated that fact, as millions remained enslaved under brutal totalitarian regimes. The tragic consequences of Communist control in Vietnam were also well-known to many by that time, the Vietminh having left a legacy of death and despair that could not easily go unnoticed.

The determined Dulles proceeded to the task of marshaling the forces of the Free World to resist Communism in its newest theater of major operations: mainland Southeast Asia. Dulles

was not detached or disinterested with events at Geneva, as some critics have alleged, but rather he chose to spend his time away from the fruitless words of the negotiation table and instead travel to Europe and beyond to garner the support that the Free World needed.⁷³ The Secretary of State knew that the combined power of the Free World could cancel the power of the Communist movement working in the “political vacuum” of Southeast Asia and thereby check the “domino effect” in that region.⁷⁴

But if Dulles was ready to “dance” at Geneva he soon found that he would do so alone among the major Western participants, the others proving to be only reluctant dance partners at best.⁷⁵ The Secretary of State was troubled by the hesitance of the British and French allies, who didn’t share the United States’ resolve to fight Communism in Southeast Asia. Dulles solicited French support and warned French President Pierre Mendes that disunity at Geneva would be exploited by the Communists and would cause greater strains on relations between France and the United States.⁷⁶ American diplomats during the conference likewise solicited support from Great Britain but found that the response fell short of Washington’s expectations. Dulles and his assistant Bedell Smith attributed the hesitancy of their allies to economic weaknesses, domestic political unrest, and fears that a confrontation with Communism would bring nuclear war.

The reluctance of America’s allies to enter the diplomatic fight with the Communists at Geneva was indeed one of the more disappointing moments for U.S. policymakers there. The lack of unity and coordination stood in contrast to the united efforts of the allies in Korea, the formation of NATO, and other collective security measures of the post-World War II era. Dulles could not hide his anxiety over this matter. His writings reflect not only a frustration but also a deep concern that the failure to achieve a united effort against the Communist would increase their hostility and thus force the United States to take greater risks and countermeasures.⁷⁷

Dulles' concerns gave way to his courage and his unshakeable belief that the United States could take the lead in this matter and motivate its allies to join America's containment policy at a later time. He remarked:

The decline of France, the great weakness of Italy, and the considerable weakness in England create a situation where I think that if we ourselves are clear as to what should be done, we must be prepared to take the leadership in what we think is the right course, having regard to long-range US interests which includes importance of Allies. I believe that our Allies will be inclined to follow, if not immediately, then ultimately strong and sound leadership. In saying this, I do not underestimate the immense difficulty of our finding the right course in this troubled situation. Nor do I mean to imply that I think that this is the moment for a bold or war-like course.⁷⁸

The delegations from free Laos and free Cambodia were far more concerned about the Vietminh's military abilities than the British and French. Having lived through an invasion by the Communist Vietnamese that was masked as a "liberation," both the Laotian and the Cambodian delegations demanded the immediate withdrawal of Vietminh forces.⁷⁹ The Cambodian delegation asserted: "All regular and irregular Vietminh forces shall, on the date of the cessation of hostilities, be evacuated from Cambodian territory and regrouped, in Vietminh territory, in the assembly areas assigned to the Vietminh command by agreement between the French, Viet Nam, and Vietminh commands."⁸⁰ Both delegations also demanded that armed elements acting outside of government regulations be disbanded—a clear reference to the Communist insurgents operating in Cambodia and Laos.

The American delegation supported these nationalistic aspirations of free Cambodia and free Laos, considering these demands to be basic needs of developing, independent nations in Southeast Asia. Bedell Smith, who attended many of the sessions at Geneva, recoiled at the Vietminh's propaganda, which masked the militancy against the independent nations of Cambodia and Laos. He asserted:

I cannot refrain, however, from commenting on this remarkable effrontery in describing the brutal Viet Minh aggression against Cambodia and Laos as a movement of ‘liberation.’ At present I will merely say that after his statement, it is extremely difficult to believe that the Viet Minh representative has come to this Conference with any intention of negotiating a just and durable peace.⁸¹

Although free Laos and free Cambodia indeed had much at stake at Geneva, the nationalist Vietnamese had more so. Vietminh targets for conquest included Cambodia and Laos but unification of Vietnam under Communist totalitarianism was an immediate, a pressing, and a pivotal goal of Uncle Ho and his followers.⁸² All true Vietnamese nationalist understood that dire mission and refused to collaborate with the Communists, with the exception of some “useful idiots,” as V.I. Lenin called these types, dupes who ignored the true intentions of the Communist movement while clinging to propaganda promises which had no substance.

Ngo Dinh Diem, who later lead South Vietnam, refused to honor the Geneva agreement because it allowed the Communists threat to remain active and growing in Vietnam. Diem abhorred the decision to divide Vietnam along the 17th parallel—an abhorrence shared by the United States delegation to Geneva.⁸³ His delegation noted with emphasis:

This proposal made on the formal instructions of His Majesty Bao Dai, and of President Ngo Dinh Diem, shows that the chief of state of Vietnam once more places the independence and the unity of his country above any other consideration, and that the national government of Vietnam would prefer this provisional UN control over a truly independent and United Vietnam to its maintenance in power in a country dismembered and condemned to slavery.⁸⁴

Ironically, Ho and his supporters, who had supported the division of Vietnam, later claimed to be the side that fought for “unification” of Vietnam and accused South Vietnam of dividing the country.⁸⁵

Diem also knew that the Vietnamese Communists would not honor the agreement and would resort to their revolutionary activities, working to undermine the government and society

of South Vietnam. His reservations about the Vietminh proved to be correct. He noted the following year:

We shall not miss any opportunity which would permit the unification of our homeland in freedom, but it is out of the question for us to consider any proposal from the Vietminh, if proof is not given us that they put the superior interests of the national community above those of communism; if they do not give up terrorism and totalitarian methods; if they do not cease violating their obligations, as they have done by preventing our countrymen of the North from going South, by attacking recently still another, together with the communist Pathet Lao, the friendly State of Laos.⁸⁶

The Eisenhower administration continued to peg its plans and operations to these Vietnamese nationalists and hoped to develop the sentiments of these non-Communists into a “viable alternative” to the insurgency led by the Vietminh. However, many accounts of the Vietnam War have made a serious mistake about President Eisenhower’s thoughts concerning Vietnamese nationalism during the Geneva period. Rather than emphasizing that his administration supported the nationalistic hopes of the Vietnamese people, the opposite is often reported in Left-wing histories; these accounts assert that “Ike” supported the South Vietnamese under Diem knowing fully that he and his associates did not have the support of the Vietnamese people, particularly in the countryside--the rural peasant who constituted 80 percent of the population of Vietnam.⁸⁷

More specifically, many critics of the war, along with anti-war activists during the 1960s, alleged that the United States knew that Ho Chi Minh would have won a national election, which the Geneva agreement stipulated should take place within two years after the conference ended. These critics assert that the United States not only backed an unpopular candidate (Diem) but also thwarted the elections, and thus interfered with the free choice of the Vietnamese people. President Nixon refuted this notion in his classic commentary on the war in Vietnam, *No More Vietnams*:

Many in the American antiwar movement claimed that Ho would have defeated Diem in a fair contest. They argued that even President Eisenhower conceded this point in his memoirs. The passage they always cited reads: 'I have never talked or corresponded with a person knowledgeable in Indochinese affairs who did not agree that had elections been held as of the time of the fighting, possibly 80 percent of the population would have voted for the Communist Ho Chi Minh as their leader rather than Bao Dai.' Those who conclude from this quotation that Ho would have won *any* elections overlook two facts. The Geneva-sponsored election was to be held *not at the time of the fighting*, by which Eisenhower meant 1954, but rather in 1956. And Ho's opponent would have been not a hapless French puppet, Bao Dai, but a popular anti-French nationalist, President Diem.⁸⁸

President Nixon's point about the elections is salient: American leaders during the Geneva period did not allow Ho's propaganda image, which hid his Communist and totalitarian methods, to go unchallenged in the proposed elections. The Vietnamese Communists wanted elections immediately and thus feared that their propaganda images would diminish with the passage of time.⁸⁹ A nationalist candidate such as Diem could potentially expose the deception involved in Ho's regime, which built its public perception on propaganda images and not factual information. Dulles supported Diem and welcomed the challenge of free elections. He noted:

We also believe that, if there are conditions of really free elections, there is no serious risk that the Communists would win.

The Communists have never yet won any free election. I don't think they ever will. Therefore, we are not afraid at all of elections, provided they are held under conditions of genuine freedom which the Geneva armistice agreement calls for. If those conditions can be provided we would be in favor of elections, because we believe that they would bring about the unification of the country under free government auspices.⁹⁰

Ho's party never accepted "free elections" and international control but demanded complete control of local elections in the North.⁹¹ Nixon noted that the Vietminh had rigged elections in the past and would undoubtedly have done so again. He remarked:

Ho's distaste for controlled free elections had not abated by 1956. Pham Van Dong told a reporter how Ho expected the election to be run. There would have to be a multiparty contest in South Vietnam, but the ballot in North Vietnam, where the people had been 'united,' would have only the Communist party on it.

This would have made the election a sure thing for Hanoi, because North Vietnam contained 55 percent of the total Vietnamese population. An election that guaranteed victory was the only kind Ho ever would have accepted.⁹²

Accurate histories of the Vietnam War should therefore set the record straight and underscore that the Vietnamese Communists--not the United States and South Vietnam--refused to hold free and fair elections.

The conclusion of the Geneva Conference in July 1954 was not marked by a unanimous agreement on the terms of peace and stability for Indochina. First, there were several agreements not one singular agreement. The ambiguity of Geneva furthermore included unilateral declarations. Only the cease-fire was binding on all participants. President Nixon noted the inconclusive outcomes:

The text of the Geneva Declaration about elections was not legally binding on the United States or South Vietnam. Nine countries gathered at the conference and produced six unilateral declarations, three bilateral cease-fire agreements, and one unsigned declaration. The cease-fire agreements alone were binding for their signatories; the provision concerning reunification elections appeared in the separate final declaration. Only four of the nine states attending committed themselves to the declarations terms. The United States did not join in it. South Vietnam, which was not even present in Geneva, retained its freedom of action by issuing a formal statement disavowing the declaration. North Vietnam also did not associate itself with the declaration. Very simply, it had no legal force.⁹³

Nevertheless, the American delegates pledged that the United States would not thwart the agreements, which “on paper” called for an end to Communist aggression. Concerned that the Communists would use the Geneva Declaration to obstruct rather than honor peace in Vietnam, Washington’s final word at Geneva contained a caveat that renewed aggressions by Ho’s Communists would provoke a serious response by the United States. This decision reflected a realistic understanding of the diplomatic maneuvering of the Communist bloc.⁹⁴

The final Declaration of the Geneva Conference in July of 1954 called for a variety of measures aimed at “stabilizing” Indochina.⁹⁵ Military measures for all sides included a cease-

fire, withdrawal of military forces to respective zones (north of the 17th parallel for the Vietminh; south of the 17th parallel for the French); no military alliances for the states of Indochina; no military movement across the demarcation line; no introduction of fresh troops; no introduction of foreign troops into Vietnam, and an establishment of a demilitarized zone.

Political measures included a temporary partition of Vietnam according to the aforementioned zones; the monitoring of events by the International Control Commission; free elections within two years; no political retribution on those who collaborated with the other side; exchange of prisoners; no subversion of the opposing political zones; and territorial respect of the states of Indochina. The Declaration also called for both sides to allow the people of their respective zones to choose whether to stay or leave the zone for the other side.⁹⁶ This stipulation resulted in a mass exodus from North Vietnam, an event with vast social implications that will be discussed in the next chapter.

The end of the Geneva Conference was anything but an end to hostilities in Indochina and the beginning of peace. The Communist forces had again used the diplomatic table for “fighting while negotiating”: a tactic that allowed the banner of Lenin to fly defiantly over Hanoi while the French exited North Vietnam and its new occupants made preparations for the war against the South. The Eisenhower administration had resisted negotiations with the Communist world because it feared that the “Geneva Waltz” would be a prelude to a “funeral dirge”--yet another insurgency in East Asia. Those concerns proved to be correct shortly thereafter.

Chapter 4

“Peaceful Activities”: North Vietnam’s Covert Invasion of the South, 1954-1961



Operation Passage to Freedom, 1954

The flurry of activity that followed the conclusion of the Geneva Conference of 1954—the mass migration to the south; troop withdrawals to the respective zones of North and South; the arrival of the International Control Commission and many foreign journalists; the presence of hosts of U.S.,

CHRONOLOGY:

21 July 1954: The Geneva Conference ended.

August-December 1954. Hanoi clarified its mission to supporters and to Party members, ordering them to prepare for an insurgency to “reunify Vietnam.”

1954-1959. Hanoi consolidated its hold on the North and developed a large and modern military force in preparation for conquering the South. Major human rights violations occurred commonly.

1954-1956. Hanoi flouted the Geneva Accords by failing to remove all its forces from the South, ordering insurgents to remain there and subvert the Government of Vietnam (South Vietnam), blocking many Northerners who wanted to move South, and developing further the Communist revolutions in Laos and Cambodia.

January 1959. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (North Vietnam) ordered the covert invasion of the South and genocide of its local leadership.

December 1960. North Vietnam announced the development of a puppet organization in the South that was commonly known as the “Vietcong” but officially called the National Liberation Front.

1959-1961. Hanoi continued to press its position in Laos, developing logistical and military operations there. Massive Soviet support coming to Laos through the North escalated tensions in the region.

21 January 1961. John F. Kennedy became the thirty-fifth President of the United States.

Chinese, and Russian advisers—were only foreground activities that did not reveal the essence of the insurgency that North Vietnam carefully prepared at this time. Rather than a strict obedience to the Geneva Agreements, North Vietnam broke every major aspect of that trust in order to execute yet another phase of “peoples’ wars” in mainland Southeast Asia.

The subsequent events of that preparation for “peaceful activities” (as Hanoi called it) revealed the implementation of the initial stages of one of the most sophisticated insurgencies in modern history, which drew in both the United States and the freedom loving peoples of Indochina--taxing their minds as well as their resources. Although “the tune of the dance” was indeed familiar, the Communist Vietnamese conducted their subversive activities with a skill, timing, and deceptiveness that challenged the very best policymakers in Washington while threatening to kill the new-born nation of South Vietnam before it took its very first steps in the Free World.

However, in the late summer and early fall of 1954 Hanoi faced a dilemma in the early stage of its revolution to “reunify” Vietnam. The Communist chiefs needed to strike a balance between stealth and concealment of revolutionary activities on one hand, and clearly communicating objectives of the Vietnamese Communist Party to the target population (masses of Vietnamese) on the other hand. The Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) feared that overt military actions and large-scale revolutionary activities would provoke a military response from the United States that would crush the nascent revolution in the South or smash North Vietnam in a collision of superpowers ensuing from the intervention of both the Communist bloc and the Free World.¹ Therefore covert activities and gradual escalations of violence, “step by step,” as Hanoi stated, became common tactics of the strategy orchestrated in the North for its planned “long war” against South Vietnam and its American ally.²

In contrast to the Korean War (1950-1953) when Communist North Korea led by Kim Il Sung rapidly invaded South Korea with conventional military forces and thus incurred the wrath of the United States, the DRV structured its initial military operations slowly and covertly, hoping to avoid the same outcomes of that earlier Cold War conflict in Northeast Asia.³

However, if Hanoi wove the cloak of deception too tightly and too broadly around its military strategy, potential support for the Vietnamese Communists could evaporate. The DRV's strategists feared that the government of Ngo Dinh Diem could take advantage of the uncertainties and the apprehensions of the many followers of Ho Chi Minh who sought clarity for their mission—apprehensions that stemmed from the lack of leadership from the North and the inability of many Vietnamese to look beyond that cloak and clearly understand Hanoi's intentions.⁴

The matter was so serious that none other than Ho Chi Minh took it upon himself to clarify political objectives and to lead the propaganda campaign against the South, which was designed to discredit and to resist the new government of Diem and his supporters. In September “Uncle” urged “southern compatriots” to organize, unite, and “struggle to secure such democratic rights as freedom of organization, freedom of opinion, etc., to prepare free general elections for national unification.”⁵ However, Ho emphasized these political objectives while carefully prohibiting major military operations against the Diem regime, for the Vietnamese Communist revolution was yet in the preparation stage and unable to meet the challenges that lay immediately ahead.

Although Ho began the early stages of the insurgency in the South by using “the front door,” ordering some of his supporters to manipulate respected methods such as elections, which the Geneva Agreements called for in name, he also operated through the “back door” by

promoting the subversive, low-intensity revolutionary methods that marked classic Maoist insurgency tactics⁶ and that defiantly violated the compact in Switzerland. For example, a month earlier on July 22, 1954, immediately after the Geneva Conference, Ho also stated to his followers and sympathizers:

We must devote all possible efforts during the peace to obtain the unification, independence and democratization of the entire nation. . . . We shall struggle infallibly. . . to obtain [these for] all Viet Nam, together with the peoples of the other sectors of the country. The struggle will be long and difficult; all the peoples and soldiers of the north and south must unite to conquer victory.⁷

Ho's two-tiered tactic, a ploy used frequently throughout his revolutionary life, allowed Hanoi to revile the South for violating the Geneva Agreements while the North claimed to obey them scrupulously—a propaganda maneuver that succeeded to no small degree.⁸

While myriads of Red propaganda speeches and zealous cadre work from the DRV depicted the South in the most negative terms, Hanoi supplemented Ho Chi Minh's lead and issued additional orders over the course of the following two years that attempted to articulate the ideology and the duties of the victorious Vietminh and to direct preparations for the incipient insurgency. As faithful Communists fanned the smoldering revolution in South Vietnam, the Party urged its followers there to understand that these methods of "peace" were "revolutionary" and not a capitulation to the capitalist world.⁹

Propaganda from Hanoi rebuffed those who interpreted the Party's peace plan as a tolerance of the Diem regime. Rather, the peace was a time, a breathing space, to develop revolutionary forces for a final moment when the South would be crushed and then united with the North as one country.¹⁰ In 1957 a Hanoi radio broadcast declared: "In other words, one must contain one-self before a temporarily powerful enemy. All these are aimed at husbanding our strength and developing it in view of the final battle, the life or death struggle."¹¹

Hanoi's political ideology during the period (and afterward) never recognized the authority of the Saigon regime but rather flouted and undermined it. Ho Chi Minh's speeches, like others coming from Hanoi, treated the South and its inhabitants as an inseparable part of the North. While dismissing the "puppet regime" in Saigon with contempt, the Party issued orders and decrees directly to the South as if the Geneva Accords had never taken place and had never given authority to Diem's government.¹² Consequently, Ho Chi Minh exhorted the Vietnamese of the South as well as the North as follows:

Maintenance and consolidation of peace require close solidarity on our part—solidarity among the entire people from North to South as in one family; solidarity with the peoples of Cambodia and Laos; solidarity with the Asian people, with the French people, and the peace-loving people of the world, in particularly the Chinese and Soviet peoples.

We must unite in a monolithic bloc against the maneuvers of peace wreckers, the U.S. imperialists, the war-thirsty French clique and their henchmen.¹³

Ironically, Hanoi continued to refer to its revolutionary activities as "peaceful means" throughout these preparation years and even after the insurgency advanced to open warfare and to large-scale guerrilla fighting in the 1960s.¹⁴ Although Ho Chi Minh and his followers often used the term "peace," they never attempted to seek a real negotiated peace, either during this period or afterward. The term "peaceful activities" was therefore an empty and a meaningless slogan used among the Vietnamese Communists to conceal their aggressive designs.

Nevertheless, the primary task of Hanoi after Geneva was to develop the North into a "rear area" of revolution in order to conquer the South and unify Vietnam. The DRV's leaders relegated the quality of life, establishment of justice, and protection of the innocent in North Vietnam (according to Communist interpretations) to a position of secondary importance so that the "revolution" could develop its full capacity. Ho Chi Minh asserted during the time period that "[t]he North is the foundation, the root of the struggle for complete national liberation and

reunification of the country. That is why everything we are doing is aimed at strengthening both the North and the South.¹⁵”

North Vietnam became a Communist “beehive” from 1955-1959--the period of “consolidation” as Hanoi stills calls that time in their history--and buzzed with preparations for war. Aid from the Communist bloc arrived in bulk into the ports and warehouses of North Vietnam where enthusiastic hands awaited these critical goods and materials. Soviet military advisors as well as Chinese ones flooded into North Vietnam, joining economic advisors, medical missions, civic development crews, and construction groups--all from the Communist bloc.¹⁶

Their aim was singular: the transformation of North Vietnam into a “Communist outpost in Southeast Asia.” *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975* noted that “from the Demilitarized Zone to the northern border, from the mountain jungles to the lowlands, the coastal regions, and the offshore islands, from the cities to the countryside, the atmosphere seethed with enthusiasm for study, for building our army into a regular force, and for increasing vigilance and combat readiness.”¹⁷

But many “scholars” have failed to draw the obvious implication of this foreign intrusion into Vietnam. While many histories of the war criticize the United States for “invading” Vietnam and “violating” its historical (if not sacred) aversion to outsiders, few historians have addressed this massive intervention by Soviet, Chinese, Eastern European, and Cuban outsiders into the life and affairs of the Vietnamese.¹⁸

The multiplied thousands of economic, political, technical, and military advisers from “fraternal countries” that facilitated the development of the infrastructure of Hanoi’s repressive state apparatus have escaped the criticisms that have been used to demonstrate the alleged folly

of American intervention in Vietnam. Left-wing histories have posited that U.S. policy in Vietnam was doomed to failure because of the Vietnamese aversion to outsiders; yet the same critics fail to apply the same reasons equally and logically to North Vietnam for its use of Communist bloc support.

Notwithstanding, astute historians like Douglas Pike already have addressed this period and have written much about Hanoi's organizational abilities, construction of the National Liberation Front (Vietcong), and covert invasion of South Vietnam.¹⁹ Pike's studies underscore the organizational strength of North Vietnam and its "peoples' war." Studies like this emphasize correctly that the Vietnamese Communists in Hanoi developed carefully and masterfully an insurgency that rested upon grassroots organizations and subversive groups, which penetrated deeply into South Vietnamese society.

North Vietnamese documents from the period in question clearly validated this thesis and indicated that Hanoi patiently resisted the pressures at home and abroad to begin full-scale military operations during this consolidation period.²⁰ Hanoi would not begin the major guerrilla activities that became common place in South Vietnam during the mid-1960s until the political apparatus was ready to face the hardships of a prolonged war and "powerful enemy." *Victory in Vietnam* remarked that "[t]he development and consolidation of Party organizations (Party committees, Party chapters, Party membership), mass organizations (youth, women, farmers associations), etc., were the foundations for building the rear area as well as for the development of the struggle against the enemy and expansion of guerrilla warfare."²¹

Over a decade later an intelligence briefing paper from the "U.S. Military Assistance Command-Vietnam" underscored this organizational ability of Hanoi and considered this fact to

be essential information for understanding the historical development of the insurgency in South Vietnam. The document noted:

The gradual change from political mobilization to armed struggle during this first stage requires a period of long preparation. The development and consolidation of a political organization and the expansion of this organization to all parts of the country, linked with the firm establishment of the party front and military committees, are all necessary steps to prepare adequately for an insurrection. Each step must be completed in great detail to preclude a later disastrous breakdown. Only after all steps are thoroughly completed can the insurgency proceed to the second stage strategy.²²

However, the rapid transformation of North Vietnam into a massive military state that spearheaded a potent insurgency in South Vietnam and beyond is a subject that provokes many to further questions and investigation. The consolidation of North Vietnam transcended issues of political, economic, and military organization and preparedness. The degree of popular support for Hanoi, the militancy and vigor of its soldiers, and the robotic obedience of the North Vietnamese to a self-destructive ideology that robbed life and liberty in the name of democracy and justice were all personal aspects of Vietnamese Communism that still strike the Western mind as a social and political anomaly.

During the period, the determination and resolve of the people of the North became immediately apparent, indicating the presence of powerful personal influences. For example, Le Thanh, a typical Communist Vietnamese and a mechanical engineer, described his devotion to Vietnamese Communism as follows:

I think that almost all of us in the youth organizations felt pretty much the same way. We had no private lives to speak of. Although we were teenagers, we didn't have any girlfriends. I told myself that I should live as a real Communist lives, the pure life of a revolutionary. We tried not to even think about girls. We would feel guilty if we caught ourselves singing some romantic song. At that time the party had a slogan called 'Ba Khoan'—'The Three Delays': 'If you don't have a child, delay having one. If you aren't married, delay getting married. If you aren't in love, delay love. So we delayed love. Instead we built up our

feelings about the mountains and the rivers and the flowers in the places we lived. We loved these things and we felt strongly that we were ready to die for them.²³

Statements like the above typified North Vietnamese behavior and indicated that these powerful social and psychological forces permeated Communist organizational practices and tactics, making the durability of Hanoi's Communist state not just a fact but a major threat to the security of the Saigon government. The Vietnamese Communist cadre (propaganda teams) that swarmed over North and South Vietnam carried political weapons perhaps more potent than their small arms. For these "agit-prop" teams understood well the host of individual emotions that could be used to bring people into the Communist movement, sentiments that ran so deep that the recruit barely understood the intense level of psycho-emotional energy driving their responses to the tune of Hanoi's "pied pipers."

Historians and experts on Communist insurgencies like to quote Mao Zedong's famous statement on that subject: "the guerrilla lives in the midst of the people like fishes in the water."²⁴ Mao's words indicated that the Communists relied on popular support, whether manipulated or artificially created. But perhaps, a more accurate statement on Communist insurgencies would be: "The Communists would drain the water of the sea so that the fish (the people) had no choice but to swim in Communist aquariums (societies) in order to survive."

The Vietnamese Communists understood well the power dynamics of totalitarianism.²⁵ They knew that most people who faced intense political and social pressures in a controlled society conformed to the objectives of their leaders rather than challenge them. The organizational power that North Vietnam possessed after Geneva, backed by both the Soviet Union and China, allowed Hanoi to surround the Vietnamese in the North with a totalitarian system that controlled all the economic, social, and political institutions that supported their existence and well being—effectively strangling their will to resist. The ordinary Vietnamese in

this zone had few other alternatives to conforming and to giving support to the Communist cause, which dominated their lives from morning to night.

In order to eat, work, domicile, socialize, marry, and travel, the people of North Vietnam had to obey this “socialist system” in order to meet their basic human needs. Yes, even the very thoughts of the people were carefully monitored and cultivated by the Party apparatus. A North Vietnamese Colonel reflected upon his dependence on the Communist system:

In fact I had no personal life at all. Party members were not supposed to think about their personal lives. Their job was to carry out the Party’s orders. Inside I didn’t agree with this at all. But it didn’t make any difference who agreed and who didn’t. You still had to follow the Party’s decisions. You follow the rules of the game where you live. In any society people want to have a happy life. In a Communist society, if you want to have a happy life, you have to have a good position in the Party. To move up to a good position, you have to comply with Party discipline and effectively carry out the Party’s orders. Do the opposite and you get purged—punished and kept down. So it didn’t matter what I thought.²⁶

Once control was established by Hanoi, and the people became dependant on that totalitarian system, the Communist authorities applied increasing amounts of pressure in order to compel ever increasing amounts of service and support.²⁷ Le Thanh, the North Vietnamese citizen quoted previously and who demonstrated such servile obedience to Hanoi, gave further insights into this fact, his own behavior, as well as those like him when he stated:

People would ordinarily work double time and more on Socialist Sundays. Everyone volunteered for these competitions. There wasn’t really any choice. You didn’t get paid, but if you didn’t volunteer you would have problems—problems with your job and problems with your food rations, things that nobody was going to take any chances with. In public nobody said anything negative but at home my parents would complain about it once and a while. They resented not being able to spend their holiday peacefully with the family. But even at home there wasn’t any real anger. Most people were resigned to it.²⁸

The reader should also note in the aforesaid quote that not only did Hanoi achieve totalitarian control of the North Vietnamese but also that public resentment was often muted and compliance to the Party was achieved. Even though the oppressive hand of Hanoi had again

disturbed the lives, culture, and family life of the Vietnamese, conformity rather than resistance to these intrusions characterized public behavior in North Vietnam.

The ability of the regime in Hanoi to use its organizational power to destroy the popular will of the Vietnamese people as they degenerated into a mass of pliable social fodder was more than a specific outcome in North Vietnam. The destruction of the will of a large populace, along with the subsequent degeneration of society, were distinct results of the Communist system, character traits of Marxism-Leninism that many had observed also in such places as the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of China, and North Korea. Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, a famous Russian dissident during the Cold War, remarked about the relationship of Communist totalitarianism and social degeneration in the Soviet Union:

We have been so hopelessly dehumanized that for today's modest ration of food we are willing to abandon all principles, our souls, and all the efforts of our predecessors and all the opportunities for our descendants—but just don't disturb our fragile existence. We lack staunchness, pride, and enthusiasm. We don't even fear universal nuclear death, and we don't fear a third world war. We have already taken refuge in the crevices.

We fear only to lag behind the herd and to take a step alone—and suddenly find ourselves without white bread, without heating gas and without a Moscow registration.²⁹

This effect on the populace also extended into the “liberated zones” or villages in the South, where the Vietcong later applied the same tactics and, in essence, replaced the government apparatus and social life of the village with a Communist-dominated system. In fact, the primary tasks and chief political objectives of the North Vietnamese and its Vietcong were the usurpation, the destruction, and the replacement of the South Vietnamese government--village by village.³⁰

In reaction to the aforesaid outcomes of Communist practice, American foreign policymakers during the Cold War often used the term “enslavement” when referring to this

Communist social and political system. The term “enslavement,” which may seem exaggerated to some, describes aptly the very nature and essence of Communism. Using force, the threat of force, and fear--all intertwined with an all-pervasive bureaucratic system--the Marxist-Leninist revolutionaries exercised an extraordinary degree of power over their subjects.

Colonel Lansdale remarked about this characteristic of Communists movements in Southeast Asia, who trapped their supporters and then used force and intimidation to extract service. He noted:

I had personal views about the Asian Communists from my brushes with them. I was saddened by what had happened to some of them who had joined the Communist ranks initially for idealistic reasons, such as the righting of social injustices, and who then had found themselves bound to a system they gradually lost faith in, kept there by vindictive security measure or feelings of guilt for acts they had been induced to participate in. These captive of the system included a number of the Communist notables, men whose private agonies must have been Promethean.³¹

Moreover, as North Vietnam “consolidated” its victory and extended the reach of its organizations, Hanoi found many within its population who yearned for a purpose and for incorporation into the larger society. French colonialism had alienated hosts of Vietnamese and had created thereby a deep dissatisfaction among them. The Vietnamese Communist Party recognized this critical social development and prioritized the need to incorporate these disaffected and disfranchised masses into the Communist system.³² Although Hanoi never gave these victims of French colonialism any real power and freedom, the mere fact that Communism offered personal recognition and the opportunity to participate in the political and social life--under the careful scrutiny and control of the Party--allowed those who suffered a deep sense of personal shame and unworthiness to gain at least a pittance of respect and a feeling of usefulness.³³

Those who have observed Vietnamese Communism in action--a perspective “from the field”--can easily understand how the social organizations under the Party’s control effectively created sympathy, participation, and loyalty. The vast array of youth organizations, professional and intellectual societies, study sessions, village meetings, and self-criticism gatherings all gave the individual a sense of purpose, a mode for channeling one’s personal and vocational skills, an object of pride, and a source for reward and recognition.

During one of my trips to Vietnam in 2000 and 2001 I had the opportunity to attend a local village meeting of the Communist Party held in the Mekong Delta. I found that the individual who lead the Party gathering had no real authority to either challenge the centralized decisions of the Party or to foster freedoms that would bolster the hopes of the Vietnamese in his particular village. Clad in the type of humble clothing that one commonly finds at a thrift shop in the United States, this local Party leader walked about the run-down building which served as his theatrical stage while beaming with pride from the attention given to his position.

Whereas in a capitalist system, this local Party leader who was poor, ordinary in appearance, limited in educational training, and employed in a common agricultural location would have found himself most likely on the fringes of society, deprived of the attention, social status, visibility, and position commonly available in the Communist system. Similarly, during the “American War,” the many “have-nots” of Vietnam who were compelled by their drive for identity, power, and retribution became a powerful component of the Communist cause, which harnessed this power and bent it toward the objectives of the Party.³⁴

The Vietnamese Communist system also provided immediate empowerment through the provision of military arms and training. In contrast to the strict regulations on arms sales that were typical of American defense policies, the Communists dug freely into their rich supplies of

weapons and offered them to all who demonstrated an antipathy to the West and its supporters. Moscow, Peking, and Hanoi all used the same tactic to gain a foothold in the developing world.³⁵ For these comrades knew that the strong sense of gratification that the guerrilla insurgent gained through the acquisition of arms came with a price tag.

That strong sense of satisfaction that the Third World guerrilla felt as he or she carried an AK-47 and aroused the wrath of an “imperialist” government brought with it a further need for support from the Communist authorities. The insurgent soon found that the Communist world exerted an ever increasing level of control through these arms transfers, the need for ammunition, technical training, and advisement—the military needs that naturally accompany the escalations of insurgent wars. Whether North Vietnamese, Vietcong, Pathet Lao, or Khmer Rouge, the story in this regard was identical in character.

For example, as Laotian Prince Souphanouvong built the Communist insurgency in his native land after World War II, he faced many critics who opposed the influence of Vietnamese Communism in their region even more vehemently than French influence there. “The Red Prince” debated these countrymen and retorted sharply:

Our weapons--because weapons, and effective ones at that, are necessary, and so is ammunition, which must be constantly manufactured--must protect our propaganda, ensure the security of our political leaders and buttress our diplomatic action. . . . But from where, Your Ministerial Excellencies, do we take these indispensable weapons? All weapons in their possession have come from the Vietnamese, and to place hope in the vague promises of others seems hardly realistic. Nor is there reason to count on a friendly gesture on the part of the 'colonialist hangmen.'³⁶

In fact, the organizational power of North Vietnam--which crushed its opposition and enticed support--penetrated far deeper into the lives of the Vietnamese than just their surroundings. Hanoi's propaganda had a marked ability to penetrate into the “hearts and minds” of the populace and to cultivate their emotions and thoughts—creating sensitivities to issues that

were selected by the Party for its own ends. The legacy of French colonialism also generated deep-seated hatreds and bitterness among the Vietnamese people, a feeling that permeated these people perhaps more strongly than any other. American diplomatic and intelligence sources as early as 1948 regarded the “anti-colonial” and racial attitudes of the peoples of Indochina as perhaps the strongest political and social belief that the Vietnamese people held, a sentiment that the Communists easily exploited to their own ends.³⁷

The Communist cadre were masters at fomenting, manipulating, and shaping these widespread antagonisms, effectively redirecting these powerful and self-deluding emotions against the allies, which stood as the surrogates of French colonialism, according to Hanoi’s propaganda.³⁸ For many Vietnamese, who had suffered personal losses under French colonialism (or the Diem regime) and carried the emotional scars of that system, the Communist cause provided a cathartic outlet for emotional pains that could be barely contained.

Douglas Pike recorded an excellent example of this fact when he retold the story of a Communist recruit named Ba Bua. Pike retold the story:

A legendary figure of the Scarlet Pimpernel type, the ideal hero of the people’s guerrilla war, was one ‘Ba Bua,’ whose story was told in clandestine newspaper accounts of mid-1963 but apparently dating a year or so earlier. ‘Ba Bua’ is an ordinary young peasant. . . . He had just been married and was living peacefully in a small house in Cai Cam hamlet when the enemy’s troops launched a surprise mopping-up operation and captured Ba Bua’s bride, who resisted with all her strength. Infuriated, the troops stripped her, tied her up, and took her back to their post, then raped her and took out her liver and ate, yes, ate it. Upon hearing this Ba Bua almost went mad and could not sleep or eat for a week. . . . Then he joined a guerrilla band.³⁹

The aforesaid propaganda technique was not uncommon. In fact, North Vietnam’s military recruitment relied heavily upon the manipulation of popular hatreds.⁴⁰ North Vietnamese citizens responded often too the zealous work of cadre who would not let an opportunity pass without stoking the fires of personal hatred while carefully directing these

passions into concrete actions on behalf of the Party. Moreover, Hanoi's leaders routinely and methodically incited hatred among North Vietnamese soldiers before they went to fight in the South, urging them "to hate the United States and Diem."⁴¹

Thus Communism in North Vietnam not only provided a cathartic outlet for lingering aggressions left over from the French colonial era but also a target for that aggression in the form of the "American imperialists" and their "lackeys" (the Saigon regime). Nguyen Van Hung, a private in the North Vietnamese Army, reflected on his recruitment during a propaganda session:

The second part of the political indoctrination was even more important. That was the part about class struggle. Here the emphasis was on going through the whole story of the wretchedness and suffering that you, your grandparents, parents, wife, and children had gone through. One soldier told about how his grandfather was tied up and beaten to death by landlords because he couldn't pay the rent on his land. His mother was raped and he had to work as a servant. But thanks to the revolution he was now a soldier who had the opportunity to liberate the South from the domination of the America imperialists and from feudalism so that all class discrimination could be eliminated. Another guy cut his finger and used the blood to write an application to volunteer for the South. Even with my strong family feelings, I was still affected by the boiling sentiment of the meeting. I felt really encouraged. Most of the people in my unit were tremendously enthusiastic during the entire training period.⁴²

A Vietcong recruit reported a similar story, recalling her reaction to the death of her father, who had joined the Vietcong. She remembered:

When the revolution broke out, I was just a kid. In 1962, the puppet soldiers came to my house and said, 'Your father was a Viet Cong so we killed him. Go fetch his body.' He had gone to a meeting with his comrades. The southern soldiers surround the building and killed everyone. From then on, I decided to take revenge for my father's death.⁴³

For other Vietnamese Communists, the venting of the rage created by or stirred by the Vietcong was an exhilarating experience. Le Ly Hayslip, a former Vietcong and the author of *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, discussed one such moment of "vengeance" and said: "It was my first taste of vengeance and I found that revenge, like the blood that once ran from

my nose during our war games on the playground, tasted sweeter than I expected. It made even a puny little farm girl feel like someone important.”⁴⁴

As the Vietnamese people emerged from the emotional turmoil of French colonialism, starved of human rights and craving the dignity, security, and prosperity of independence, they were particularly vulnerable to Communist propaganda. The daily rations of propaganda that were applied in systematic doses by Hanoi through its ubiquitous media worked over time to dominate one’s conscious thought process while appealing to the subconscious needs of a society that yearned for psycho-social palliatives and releases. Indeed, the unconscious erosion of reality in the minds of many North Vietnamese created a mental “center of gravity” that rested not in logical or individual thought but rather in the hands of Party members who garnered the political power that accrued from this outcome. In 1960, a North Vietnamese commented about the flood of propaganda:

About the same time, the situation in the South started getting a lot more attention. Radio programs, newspaper articles, all sorts of meetings talking about liberating the South and unifying the country. The street corner loudspeakers kept up a steady stream of information and commentary—morning, lunchtime, and evening—any time that people were on the streets. You heard it constantly. Southerners would come in from the Front [National Liberation Front] to talk about what was happening and to drum up enthusiasm. There was an endless flood of talk about getting rid of the Americans and My-Diem—America-Diem.⁴⁵

The result of these propaganda efforts was often a zealous North Vietnamese or a Vietcong soldier whose “tunnel vision” saw nothing other than the issues of “independence” and “liberation” according to Communist definitions of those terms. Thus the repeated and constant application of disinformation worked to skew the thinking of the North Vietnamese and Vietcong, who thought and acted in ways that were conditioned by their Communist masters in Hanoi. Le Ly Hayslip typified this propaganda effect when she asserted in her book:

When the Republicans [South Vietnamese officials] put us in jail, we had the image of ‘Communist freedom’—freedom from war—to see us through. When the Viet Cong executed a relative, we convinced ourselves that it was necessary to bring ‘Communist happiness’—peace in the village—a little closer. Because the Viet Cong encouraged us to voice our basic human feelings through patriotic songs, the tortured, self-imposed silence we endured around Republicans only made us hate the government more. Even on those accessions when the Republicans tried to help us, we saw their favors as a trick or sign of weakness. Thus, even as we accepted their kindness, we despised the Republicans for it.⁴⁶

Hanoi’s manipulation of widespread hatred and racial antipathy was by no means the limit of its grasp on the emotional passions found in abundance among the Vietnamese people. The energy of its youth, coupled with the popular resentment of the corrupt and exploitive French colonial system, created an idealism among the descendants of the ancient Viets that eager cadre exploited masterfully.⁴⁷

The fact that Ho Chi Minh started his Communist movement in Vietnam by targeting its youth was not merely happenstance. These young Vietnamese, filled with idealism and eagerness to serve their country, often became the most vulnerable to Communist propaganda. In particular, the young and even children filled the ranks of the Vietcong and became characters in heinous stories about American G.I.s injured while extending a hand of friendship--or who would bend down to give a candy bar only to receive a grenade from an eight-year-old child trained in these ruthless tactics. In fact, “many children work close to their fathers and brothers in annihilating the enemy, seizing enemy weapons, and assisting our troops intelligently and bravely,” a propaganda statement asserted.⁴⁸

Ho Chi Minh not only started his Communist movement on the cornerstone of youth participation and continued to cultivate it through the consolidation period, but also the Party still utilizes this practice today in Vietnam. As Communism wanes as a vibrant ideology there among the youth, a small fraction of the young Vietnamese remain among the few and most

strident supporters of Communist ideology—mirror images of a more militant era and yet another generation victimized by Hanoi’s propaganda.⁴⁹

After the “American War” ended in 1975, and “the cat was out of the bag,” Hanoi’s leaders began to boast freely about their ability to use propaganda to forge public opinion. Today, Vietnamese Communist histories call attention to the propaganda successes of the war while Party leaders urge further study of these “revolutionary practices” that brought victory.

But while many of the victors in Vietnam marked their propaganda skills, relishing these tactics as essential components of “Ho Chi Minh Thought,” other Vietnamese suffered with dreadful guilt for being victimized by these empty slogans and promises. Doan Van Toai, a disillusioned Vietcong who deeply regretted his participation in the insurgency against South Vietnam, and who suffered political persecution by his former Communist masters after the war, “lamented for Vietnam”:

While I was in jail, Mai Chi Tho, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, addressed a selected group of political prisoners. He told us: ‘Ho Chi Minh may have been an evil man; Nixon may have been a great man. The Americans may have had the just cause; we may not have had the just cause. But we won and the Americans were defeated because we convinced the people that Ho Chi Minh is the great man, that Nixon is a murderer and the Americans are the invaders.’ He concluded that ‘the key factor is how to control people and their opinions. Only Marxism-Leninism can do that. None of you ever see resistance to the Communist regime, so don’t think about it. Forget it. Between you—the bright intellectuals—and me, I tell you the truth.’⁵⁰

Many who live in the West, or those who have never seen the results of propaganda in a Communist society, may doubt the potency of Communist misinformation, particularly its ability to shape the character of its victims and to create such strong support. Raised in a society that champions the freedom of speech and the belief that truth triumphs over error (and often effortlessly), many Americans typically find the very notion of “propaganda” to be ridiculous or at the very least ineffectual. The American public often overlooked the fact that Communist

propaganda effectively created among the Vietnamese people sensitivities for issues selected by the Party and callousness to other issues.

In the long run, yes, truth has no real challenger; and no amount of propaganda, no matter how brilliantly orchestrated, could stand the test of time and appeal to the better instincts of humanity. However, in the short-term, propaganda, properly implemented and cultivated, can certainly be a potent political means to develop the power of a militant minority and thereby facilitate their dominance of a larger society. The Vietnamese Communists, like their comrades the world over, demonstrated this fact again and again while frustrating those who opposed these outcomes.

But the DRV did not rely solely upon developing conformity through incorporation of the masses into the vast array of organizations that blanketed North Vietnam and that comprised its totalitarian system. The Vietnamese Communist *created* their societies by the use of mass murder and the selective targeting of political opposition. Having caged their captives in a system that controlled the movement of ideas as well as bodies, the Communist authorities could shape political sentiments easily—though indeed ruthlessly.

The reader should remember the lessons of earlier chapters in this book, where Communist strategy demonstrated clearly that it relied upon mass murder and intimidation to create as well as to curb the sentiments of the masses.⁵¹ Throughout the post-Geneva period, as in earlier times, the Communist Party ruthlessly killed large swathes of its population while imprisoning thousands of others in concentration camps (“reeducation camps”).

Death and fear followed Communist social policies as necessary expedients for keeping the system viable, according to Hanoi’s thinking. Without these drastic measures, Hanoi feared that its system would not survive very long. The fact that the Vietnamese Communist’s policy of

political murder demonstrated organizational depth and refinement, sophistication and extensiveness, individual discipline and prioritization by Hanoi, all indicated that it was a pivotal policy of the Communist system.⁵²

Of particular importance was the “purges” of the landlord class in North Vietnam. In order to seize control of the agricultural assets of the North, destroy potential opposition, and win the immediate approval of the landless class, Hanoi executed many landlords and redistributed their fields to poor farmers. Although the Party later collectivized the land, taking control away from these disgruntled small farmers, the land redistribution scheme effectively stripped the assets as well as the political power away from land owners.⁵³

In spite of the fact that the Party allowed some landowners in the North to live, many others were not so fortunate. After being tied up “like a pig” and denounced, a landlord named Mr. Thuoc faced a death sentence for being a brutal “reactionary” who had oppressed the people.

Portrait of the Enemy recorded his execution as follows:

Immediately, a cadre standing behind Thuoc took a small towel and stuffed it in his mouth. The crowd shouted and rattled the tambourines. They shoved Mr. Thuoc in front of an open grave and tied him to a pole. Some *bo dois* stood about three meters in front of him. Then they shot him and he fell down, still tied to the pole. Then they kicked his body into the hole.⁵⁴

The Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s “socialist renewal” during the consolidation period also involved a sinister gradualism that carefully used totalitarian power to Hanoi’s advantage. Although mass killings and political assassinations targeting selected opposition groups and leaders occurred commonly in the North, the Party temporarily relaxed its pressure on yet other political targets in order to gain long-term advantages. The temporary peace allowed the Party to gain support, conserve limited manpower and resources, concentrate on

more pressing issues and enemies, and buy time for later purges (often of the same group who had been offered benefits and temporary peace by the Communists).⁵⁵

The Party also implemented this practice in the South. For example, on March 28, 1960, a “Letter from the Party Committee for South Vietnam to Party Chapters” warned:

With regard to the implementation [of policies], the most critical error concerns the self-defense armed forces in a number of areas which did not implement correctly the lines of the Party, whose attacks spilled on to the targets that were not the most vital, and which have punished a number of elements that we do not yet have to punish. They have also warned and threatened village officials and spies in an indiscriminate manner.⁵⁶

The fact that tactical variances existed in Party operations created the need to manage these operations according to the changes and nuances of the political landscape and local conditions. Adroit Party members and cadre--who instinctively and correctly understood local and immediate political conditions--applied the proper tactical expedients and then measured outcomes in degrees of power attained and by achievement of strategic goals. Hanoi rewarded its cadre who demonstrated this skill, underscoring that this effective administration of Communist policy was an important aspect of the cultivation of the Party line.⁵⁷

But during the period of consolidation, Hanoi faced many problems in North Vietnam. As the DRV throttled the neck of the body politic of the northern zone, the flailing arms of a tortured and struggling humanity lashed out desperately at a system that intended to take away the very last breath of freedom and individualism. The attempts to subjugate many peasants under an agrarian collectivization system, college-aged youths under “socialist thought,” and ordinary Vietnamese under a Marxist utopia that looked all too much like a modern “hell” all met with some violent resistance and much lackluster support.

Rather than the prosperity that Hanoi’s propaganda promised through its programs, chaos and disillusionment gripped North Vietnam and marked its socialist agenda. For example, “land

to the tiller”—the land reform program—produced widespread misery and disillusionment. One North Vietnamese described his duties on a new collective farm as follows:

My first impression of the place was depressing; it was poverty stricken, no different than the countryside around it. At first I was overwhelmed by how severe everything was, such a contrast to the lush farmland in the South. I lived in a crowded barracks, a thin plywood plank for my bed with a flimsy plywood writing table squeezed next to it. The food was sparse, mainly rice. Just about enough of it to live on. Occasionally there'd be something to do with it, a little dried fish or meat, nothing else. . . . But instead of heroic struggle, what I saw were mostly dispirited people doing careless work. They didn't seem to give a damn about what they were doing. The land itself was new, it hadn't been cultivated before and it took an unbelievable amount of work to clear it and get it ready. And nobody really wanted to do it.⁵⁸

Even the remote villages of North Vietnam witnessed the stifling hand of Hanoi intruding into agrarian life and creating misery. Hoang Thien Loc, a Chinese man living in the North, recalled:

Life in the countryside was more boring than life in the city. It was also a lot harder. We had meat because we brought it from our homes. But some of the peasant families couldn't afford meat for months at a time. There was almost nothing to buy in the store except rice. Very little in the way of other foods or merchandise. Even private pig or chicken raising was closely controlled. The peasants would have to sell any animals they raised to the government at the official price, so there wasn't much incentive. They even had to gather the pig shit and submit it to the commune for use in the ricefields. There was an official equivalent of pig shit to rice—the peasants would be given a certain amount of rice in return for the shit they had gathered. But the control system didn't work all the time. Families that raised chickens almost always would kill one for dinner when they had any big celebration, like a birthday, anniversary or marriage, or any other important event.⁵⁹

Hanoi responded to these problems with its usual cruelty and repression, suppressing peasant revolts and purging its own Party ranks. In 1956, even Ho Chi Minh's native province of Nghe An found the “transition to socialism” to be unbearable and thus revolted against Hanoi's “land reform.” The swift retribution meted out by the Party in this province and other

areas deepened wounds and added anguish to misery in a system that had a long history of such behavior.

The shallow confession of “mistakes” and excessive force, which the Party issued after the crackdown to conceal its unbridled violence,⁶⁰ assuaged the fears of those who had cowed under the pressures of the system but stirred countless others to seek refuge in the South, where at least there was a hope of a better life. The North Vietnamese Army (NVA) private quoted earlier in this chapter also asserted about the matter of land reform:

I don't know whether land reform accomplished what they wanted it to. It was traumatic enough for me. But there was a lot of quiet talk about the murders that happened in the countryside. People whispered about a peasant rebellion in Nghe An that the 325th Division had to put down. Of course there was no official information on any of this. None of it was ever reported in the newspapers. But the troubles were confirmed indirectly when Vo Nguyen Giap [North Vietnamese minister of defense] in a big speech he gave in Hanoi's central square. I remember he was wearing civilian clothes instead of his uniform, a sign that he was speaking for the Party. He said that the land reform had had some successes but that there were also some mistakes. The Party's policy was right, but in certain localities it had been carried out incorrectly. He didn't seem terribly repentant about it. There was a rumor, though, that Uncle Ho had cried in a Central Committee meeting when he heard about the executions. But I don't know. He was an awfully foxy guy.⁶¹

But the problems stemming from Hanoi's policies, whether during the consolidation period or afterward, centered not just in deliberate punitive measures and the failures of agrarian collectivization. Even when North Vietnam attempted productive projects the outcomes were often disastrous. Hampered by the inefficiencies of a command economy (Communist centralism), by a rejection of the benefits of individual creativity and spontaneity, and by a fear of criticizing the failures of the Party, the local leaders in the North undertook economic projects that were doomed to failure and to repetition of the same mistakes.

Furthermore, the efforts to bring “radical change” fostered too rapid of a pace of reform and an overemphasis on change and destruction of “old habits” rather than practical change that benefitted the populace.⁶² Colonel Lansdale noted one such example:

Another Communist agrarian measure had disillusioned the North Vietnamese population further, particularly in the Red River region where the majority lived. Wanting to make up the deficit in rice production, the Hanoi government had followed Chinese advice and denuded the hills of trees in order to plant upland rice. With the natural cover gone, the water rushed off the hills when the rains come, bringing unprecedented floods and misery to the lowlands.⁶³

The repression, economic failures, and cruelties of North Vietnam’s government fueled the massive exodus of Vietnamese from that distressed zone. The Geneva agreement had allowed a crack of light to shine through the darkness of the North, allowing a fleeting opportunity to relocate to the South during the limited time period that followed the Geneva Agreements.⁶⁴ More than just Roman Catholics who had supported French colonialism seized that opportunity, for thousands of Buddhists and others who were members of oppressed groups joined the throngs of peasants, students, soldiers, and professionals who moved through the various checkpoints on their way south.⁶⁵

A Buddhist monk named Giac Duc recalled that moment in history and the human rights violations that were portents of problems that lied ahead. He noted:

After the Geneva Conference in 1954, I left for the South. It is often said that almost all those who went from North to South Vietnam at that time were Catholics. But that isn’t true. Almost three hundred thousand Buddhists were among the million refugees. Some went because they had been wealthy and some went because they were intellectuals. An entire Buddhist intellectual movement relocated from North to South at that time. Buddhist professors and learned monks. Eventually they changed the face of Saigon.

I went for two reasons—one personal, one religious. My family had a long tradition of anti-French politics. My father, one of Ho Chi Minh’s nationalist opponents, had been killed by the Vietminh. So I was afraid of the Communists because of my family background. Secondly, we thought that the Communists would make life difficult for Buddhists in the North—there were already

indications of that in area that had been Communists strongholds for a long time.”⁶⁶



Nearly 1 million Northern Vietnamese Move to the South, 1954-55

As the Vietnamese of the North “voted with their feet,” an indication that Ho Chi Minh’s support was eroding and unlikely to lead to a victory in the proposed elections of 1956, Hanoi reacted by hindering increasingly the exodus. “During the first two weeks of this evacuation, the Communists virtually took no action. . . . After a few days had passed Communist authorities realized the complications that were being caused by these mass movements. They began to interfere, first with mild measure, then with sterner and increasingly violent actions.”⁶⁷

The DRV’s propaganda teams redoubled their efforts among Catholics, Buddhists, and ethnic groups. [Although ethnic groups in the North, who held deep attachments to ancestral

land, were not as likely to move South, they had been troubled by the developments in that region and therefore posed a problem during the consolidation period.] Using empty promises of political and religious freedom, the Party wooed some to stay in the North and urged them to “contribute to the rebuilding of a homeland and the building of a new life.”⁶⁸ But even Ho Chi Minh’s personal appeal to Catholics during the Christmas season of 1954--an appeal that included a prayer that “the Lord blesses you all”--could not stop the hemorrhage of the DRV as refugees fled its territory and its rule.⁶⁹

At the same time, North Vietnamese troops and authorities again violated the Geneva Agreements by using force to block many refugees from moving South.⁷⁰ Even though many “mainstream” historians have neglected this subject, Hanoi’s effort to subjugate these political refugees was a major story of the period. The fact that Vietnamese Communists obstructed throngs of Northerners who were seeking freedom in the South not only violated the agreement but also caused added suffering to thousands who were forced to live under totalitarian oppression in the North. South Vietnamese Generals Nguyen Duy Hinh and Tran Dinh Tho remembered that moment well:

Even in the areas under the control of French and Vietnamese forces, the departure of the people, especially government officials, was not easy. At that time the Communists had their cadres and agents deployed almost everywhere, even in the inner cities. Many households were visited by cadres who advised against leaving or threatened to keep them from leaving. For many people, therefore, the departure from Hanoi or Haiphong had to be carried out discreetly. Properties and houses could not be sold or belongings carried away openly. Preparations for the exodus had to be made to appear as if people were intent on staying. The more discreet the preparations, the better the chance of successful departure.⁷¹

Nevertheless, as the regime in Hanoi gradually created a “rear area for revolution” as it had planned--a significant consolidation of manpower, economic resources, and military personnel--that Communist stronghold in the Red River Delta wasted no time in using its newly

acquired power. A mere chronological study of the acts of aggression that paralleled this period of consolidation in North Vietnam can not accurately capture the rate, scope, and intensity of revolutionary activities, which all flouted the Geneva Accords and threatened the very existence of South Vietnam. For the Communist Vietnamese, although not moving as openly as before Geneva, advanced rapidly and constantly on a wide geographical and political plane, moving their political agenda across legal restrictions, national boundaries, demarcation lines, village cultures, political affiliations, social classes and organizations, and even diverse personalities.⁷²

The reader should therefore understand that Hanoi's insurgency was not confined to narrow activities which moved according to rigidly planned stages. Hanoi did not wait to complete its consolidation before moving on such a broad front. Rather, the DRV moved continuously, using covert and low-intensity insurgent tactics during the preparation stage as an outlet for its growing power, which flowed increasingly from the North and progressively challenged, subverted, and harmed the South as well as Laos, Cambodia, and Thailand.

Indeed, the DRV's aggression in the region paralleled the increases in power rather than moving in convulsive steps indicative of strict planning and methodic applications that overlooked political opportunities. George F. Kennan described a similar development regarding the expansion of Soviet power:

Its political action is a fluid stream which moves constantly, wherever it is permitted to move, toward a given goal. Its main concern is to make sure that it has filled every nook and cranny available to it in the basin of world power. But if it finds unassailable barriers in its path, it accepts these philosophically and accommodates itself to them. The main of this is that there should always be pressure, unceasing constant pressure, toward the desired goal. There is no trace of any feeling in Soviet psychology that goal must be reached at any given time."⁷³

This multi-directional and multi-faceted problem plagued the allied forces for the duration of the conflict and not just the post-Geneva Accords period. These critical

developments in Hanoi's "long war" were the very essence of troubles that would confront American policymakers and soldiers during the 1960s and later.

The growth of Hanoi's power was vividly seen in its military buildup. The massive buildup and modernization of North Vietnam's conventional military forces posed an immediate challenge to South Vietnam's security. From 1954 to 1956 Hanoi not only expanded significantly the size of its military forces but also upgraded its weaponry, its logistical system, and its organizational strength with the aid of Communist bloc advisers and technology. America's policymakers, intelligence community, and military leaders watched this development carefully, noting with alarm that South Vietnam's armed forces had decreased during the very same period.⁷⁴

The statistics regarding North Vietnam's military expansion were quite telling. From 1954 to 1956 Vietminh divisions increased from seven to twenty. North Vietnam's battle corps increased from 147,000 to 250,000 personnel during that same short period of time,⁷⁵ well in excess of defensive purposes. The large increases were only a portent of larger expansions that followed and that embroiled Vietnam in armed conflict during the 1960s and later. Communist Vietnam's historians noted:

Our army's need to expand rapidly into an army made up of many specialty and service branches presented many difficult and complex problems, which we solved in a correct, timely manner. The three massive expansions of our forces also were three occasions when the strength of our armed forces grew explosively, expanding from 170,000 troops (in 1958) to 300,000 (in 1963) then to 700,000 (in 1966) and up to one million (in 1973). Our three major developmental phases were also three phases marking the tremendous maturation of our combat power: the building of a regular army with upgraded equipment (1954-1964), the rapid development of our service and specialty branches, including air force, anti-aircraft artillery, missiles, radar, armor, sappers, artillery, engineers, signal, etc. ((1964-1967), and the creation of large strategic units, 1st, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Corps (1973-1975).⁷⁶

Hanoi's military buildup during its consolidation period, coupled with its aggressive rhetoric of "liberating South Vietnam," led many among the allies to draw the conclusion that North Vietnam was planning an immediate, conventional invasion of the South. The smug criticisms of journalists, politicians, and observers who later chided President Dwight Eisenhower's administration for planning to defend against conventional rather than guerrilla forces have relied upon the benefit of hindsight rather than the realities of the period to draw their contrary remarks.⁷⁷

But during the historical period in question the Vietnamese Communist achieved a superiority in conventional forces over the forces under Diem's regime and held no reservation in military doctrine or leadership character that would forbid an overt invasion of the South using large divisions and heavy armor.⁷⁸ Therefore, even though later developments during the 1960s revealed that Hanoi's war strategy relied on a covert invasion and insurgent tactics, U.S. military strategist discerned correctly that during the post-Geneva period the threat of a conventional military invasion from the North was a definite possibility.

Hanoi covered its explosive military growth with blatant lies, denying both the use of Communist bloc advisers and the fact that the buildup had taken place.⁷⁹ Again demonstrating a penchant for combining political and military warfare, Ho Chi Minh's government vehemently accused the South of violating the Geneva Accords by turning the South into a military colony of the United States. Hanoi stretched this propaganda campaign to the limits of the international community when these "comrades" put the issue before the British government in 1956. London replied:

Her Majesty's government considers that a comparison of military developments in North and South Viet-Nam provides the best guide to the attitude and intentions of the authorities in the two zones. At the time of the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities the forces at the disposal of the French Union High

Command in Viet-Nam amounted to approximately 350,000 men. Since then over 100,000 French troops have been withdrawn and there will soon be none left, while the Viet-Nameese army itself has been reduced by 20,000 men. In North Viet-Nam, however, there has been no such reduction in military strength since the conclusion of the Agreement on the cessation of hostilities. On the contrary, the Viet Minh army has been so greatly strengthened by the embodiment and re-equipment of irregular forces that, instead of seven Viet Minh division in existence in July, 1954, there are now no less than 20. This striking contrast between massive military expansion in the North and the withdrawal and reduction of military forces in the south speaks for itself.⁸⁰

North Vietnam's militarization involved yet other direct challenges to the security of South Vietnam. The Geneva Agreements called for a withdrawal of all French and Vietminh forces to their respective zones: the Vietminh had agreed to withdraw to the North, as the French had agreed to withdraw to the South.⁸¹ Hanoi immediately violated its part of the bargain by withdrawing only a *portion* of its forces while ordering others to remain in the South and prepare for the insurgency. Moreover, those Vietminh who returned did not do so as a part of a peaceful "de-escalation" of violence in Indochina but instead became an important part of the preparation for the insurgency, military personnel who were retrained to later "struggle" in the South.

As the portion of Vietminh who moved from the South to the North arrived in various cities there, these former combatants found Party cadre eagerly awaiting their return. Rather than finding a peaceful place in a society bent on developing its humanitarian and economic potential, the "returnees" found that North Vietnam was mobilizing for war and that a new mission awaited these tired and war-weary veterans of the Franco-Vietminh conflict: a mission to unify Vietnam and conquer the South.⁸² Because many of these soldiers were natives of the South, they later proved to be well suited for furthering Party objectives there. The U.S. briefing paper quoted earlier also noted this point:

Because of the differences in dialects and customs between the various regions of Vietnam, there were distinct advantages to infiltrating soldiers born in the South. They were familiar with the terrain and often had relatives in the area, which

made it easy for them to assimilate into the local population. Equally important, the use of Southern-born infiltrators enables Hanoi to disclaim that it was intervening in the South.”⁸³

But a closer look at the “the gathering storm” over South Vietnam revealed that North Vietnam’s infiltration of the South was a vast undertaking that reached well into its government, economic, military, and social structures. Those Vietminh who remained in the South after 1954 constituted the foundation and catalyst of the insurgency that later masqueraded as an indigenous revolution against the Diem regime. What Hanoi had ordered immediately after the Geneva Accords amounted to nothing less than the complete subversion of South Vietnam, an act that revealed not only its ideological commitment to Communism but yet another defiant violation of those agreements.⁸⁴

The breadth and extent of that infiltration of the South was indeed striking. *Victory in Vietnam* noted these activities that immediately followed the Geneva Accords:

[Vietnamese Communist authorities] directed all cadre and Party members to remain in their areas of operation, to continue to recruit political assets among the masses, to maintain a number of bases in the jungles and mountains, to select and leave behind in each local area a number of military cadre, and to secretly cache a number of weapons. Party and labor youth group organizations at all levels withdrew into the shadows and began to operate in secret. Peasant associations, women's associations, etc., were disbanded. Mass organizations operating openly and legally, religious associations, production associations, mutual assistance and relief associations, sports and exercise associations, cultural and literary associations, etc., were established in all villages, hamlets, and cities. A number of cadre, party members, and revolutionary civilians were selected and dispatched by the Party to secretly infiltrate the puppet government and the puppet army.⁸⁵

The danger of these subversives lay not only in their ubiquitous presence and ability to organize resistance to the Diem regime (as the above quote demonstrated) but also in the ability to penetrate every important sector of South Vietnam’s society and state. The Vietnamese Communists, like other Marxist revolutionaries the world over, considered the secrecy, location,

and depth of position within the enemy's critical infrastructure to be essential for victory.⁸⁶ Trin Duc, one of the many Vietminh who stayed behind, noted a particular example of this effect:

From the moment Con O set itself up in Saigon there were strikes. In fact, we were behind the trouble. Our organizers, including the guy who had been arrested, were constantly arousing the workers. Of course our strategy was to let them strike over labor issues while we remained as far behind the scene as possible. But by the same token, the owner was forever trying to implicate the strikers in politics.⁸⁷

Victory in Vietnam added a similar example: "In Saigon and Cho Lon our self-defense forces grew out of the movement fighting against Diem's efforts to evict citizens and seize their property, and then remained in existence disguised under such names as volunteer fire prevention and fire-fighting associations, antirobbery associations, etc."⁸⁸

The Communist Vietnamese scored many tactical victories through their campaign to infiltrate South Vietnam in this early period. Religious, political, and social organizations throughout the South soon became infested with subversives who used these organizations to conceal revolutionary activities, to undermine the successes of the South, and to build the insurgency there. Communist histories recorded that during this time "a number of our units disguised themselves as armed units of the Binh Xuyen and of the Hoa Hao and Cao Dai religious sects in order to deceive the enemy."⁸⁹ Even as early as 1955 Hanoi could boast that its infiltrators had contributed to the overall development of the insurgency in the South and had succeeded as "many provinces in South Vietnam still had several thousand cadre and Party members, and every village had a village Party chapter."⁹⁰

The political dividends of these operatives were significant and often lasted throughout the duration of the Vietnam War. In the same year, U.S. General John O'Daniel, Chief of Military Advisory Assistance Group, warned his superiors that the Communists in the South "have the capability of increasing their underground forces three-fold over a six months period

and can block all active support of the govt in all areas except the large cities unless strong counter-action is taken by army or police.”⁹¹ These insurgents sponsored by Hanoi were also able to access critical information, to blunt or to paralyze major programs of South Vietnam, to disrupt and to replace the local governments in the South, to effectively propagandize against the South, to deflect attention from subversive activities, and to disseminate false information to the international press throughout the duration of the war.

For example, during the Vietnam War, Stanley Karnow—a well-known news correspondent for the *New York Times*--unknowingly had embraced several of these Communist operatives as “friends” and had trusted their information. In fact, the *Times* had hired one of these Communist subversives and had made him a staff correspondent, “the only Vietnamese journalist to attain full status in an American new agency.”⁹² Karnow found out after the war that not just one but two of his chief contacts were Vietcong, who had served the Communist cause faithfully.

The surprised journalist excused his own gullibility by adding, “If An and Thao had fooled correspondents like myself, they also duped the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency [CIA], which had counted them among its contacts.”⁹³ However, Karnow failed to mention that his news line, like so many others in his profession, echoed the doctrines and interpretations of Hanoi rather than the criticisms and oppositions to Communism asserted by the CIA and other federal agencies.⁹⁴

And of particular importance, these Marxist revolutionaries sponsored by Hanoi penetrated South Vietnam’s armed forces, posing a major threat to its planning and operations.⁹⁵ Stories of penetration by Communists into the South’s armed forces occurred commonly in narratives of the Vietnam War and are far too numerous to detail in this chapter. However one

such story, typical of the whole, involved Roger Donlan—the first American to receive the Medal of Honor in the war. As a Green Beret adviser to a Vietnamese Strike Force, he noted the problem of enemy infiltration and its damaging effect on allied operations:

I'd say a third of our Vietnamese forces on the outer perimeter fought for the other side. The first thing each of the traitors did when the attack started—and they knew it was coming—was to slit the throat or break the neck of the person next to them. So right off the bat our Strike Force went from three hundred down to two hundred, and possibly closer to a hundred. And the people we thought would be shooting outward were now shooting inward. It got pretty spicy very rapidly. We didn't have much help on the outer perimeter so we just had to hang on.⁹⁶

Moreover, this vast infiltration of the critical infrastructure of the South relied upon violent methods and low-intensity terror tactics, strictly administered during the vulnerable time of South Vietnam's early years. The nature and operations of these agit-prop teams were far less benign than most history books have lead their readership to believe and were not limited to mere non-violent "organizational activities."

Hanoi intentionally took advantage of the fact that the Saigon government was weak during its early years--the formative period from 1954 to 1956—and ordered "armed teams" to support the organizational work.⁹⁷ Using armed units that had almost 100 soldiers in some cases, the Party ordered these teams to recruit mass support, defend organizational activities, thwart the progressive programs of the South, and eliminate stubborn opposition to Party chapters. *Victory in Vietnam* recorded:

. . . at the present time [1956], when the entire South is conducting a political struggle, it is not yet time to launch guerrilla warfare. Instead our policy should be to conduct armed propaganda operations. Armed propaganda units are armed operations units. Propaganda team members and cadre will reveal the true face of the enemy to the people. They will encourage hatred, develop revolutionary organizations among the masses, suppress enemy thugs and intelligence agents, win the support of enemy troops, proselytize puppet troops and governmental personnel to support our mass struggle movements, and limit any combat with the enemy that might reveal our forces.⁹⁸

The political killings orchestrated by these “armed propaganda units” in the South began immediately after the Geneva Agreements and were not done in reaction to any alleged violations of the Diem regime but rather to its successes. Communist cadre in the South not only protected their organizational activities but also killed Saigon officials who carried out economic reform programs aimed at increasing the quality of life among villagers—evidences of the Party’s defensive and offensive objectives.

Lansdale commented about the outcomes of a Civic Action team working in Southern villages: “Vietminh guerrillas, who had been lying low, dug up their hidden weapons and went to work. Members of the Civic Action team began to be murdered.”⁹⁹ By 1956, the terror campaign against the successes of the Diem regime had escalated. The determined Colonel also noted:

The campaign of terror by the Communist guerrillas mentioned above was the old nightmare of savagery with murders and kidnappings. It was prompted this time by the burgeoning success that Diem and his government were having in establishing an effective rule throughout South Vietnam. The Communist leaders in Hanoi couldn’t afford to let this continue. Communist stay-behind cadre in the villages dug up their cached and undertook secret raids. Cadre who had gone north in 1954-55 started returning in small groups to their home areas in the South, fortified with refresher training in political methods and small-unit tactics. By the end of 1956, there were hundreds of Communist guerrillas in scattered bands throughout South Vietnam trying to impose a hold on the villagers.¹⁰⁰



Colonel Edward Lansdale

Diem reacted to these Communist activities in the South by using severe measures aimed at destroying the entire Party apparatus there. After repeated announcements about these subversive activities, Diem issued “Ordinance Number 6 of the Republic of Viet-Nam on Security Measures Against those Considered Dangerous to Public Security.” Enacted on January 11, 1956, the order called for monitoring, detaining, relocating, and deporting those considered to be subversives or sympathizers.¹⁰¹

In practice, the Saigon government ruthlessly prosecuted the Communists, beheading some, executing many others, and torturing yet others for information. Despite attempts by the Communists to exploit the brutality, and the fact that non-Communists had suffered also, the Party infrastructure in the South was almost destroyed. Hanoi countered these measures of the Diem regime by relying more on assassinations and armed activities, hoping these actions would help the Party salvage what was left of the underground system as well as build more bases in the South.¹⁰²

Amid the astonishing successes of the early years of the Saigon government, and the positive press coverage by American journalists of these achievements, Diem's penchant for dictatorial and inefficient measures became apparent at this time. Far from the progressive and reformist Asian leader that American policymakers had desired--the hoped-for man who could rally the people--he demonstrated obvious character and leadership faults that included nepotism, favoritism, severity, and stubbornness. Diem's failure to institute American-sponsored political reforms in the South not only played into the hands of Communist propagandists but also generated doubts among many United States policymakers concerning the viability of nation building in the South and the very prospects for success against the Communists.¹⁰³

The Eisenhower administration supported Diem as a "viable alternative" to Communism but certainly not an optimal one. Deeply committed to political reforms and economic development for emerging countries, the President was dismayed that his counterpart in South Vietnam was willing to accept the latter and not the former. The doubts regarding whether to retain Diem reached deeply into "Ike's" administration as well as his personal thoughts on the "father of South Vietnam."¹⁰⁴



**President Ngo Dinh Diem,
President of South Vietnam**

Nonetheless, the administration understood that the issue over leadership in the South necessitated realistic assessments and the need to make difficult choices: The South lacked educated and trained statesmen and civil service personnel—in addition to the institutional strength of an effective state apparatus--and thus alternatives to Diem were not readily available.¹⁰⁵ U.S. policymakers could boast after World War II that American nation building efforts in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, and other areas had succeeded remarkably under most difficult circumstances: Why not in South Vietnam under Diem?

Moreover, the transition from dictatorships to democracies within a country occurred commonly in East Asia during the second half of the twentieth century, indicating that U.S. policies regarding Diem's regime were not just possible but highly likely to succeed if Hanoi's influence was offset. In fact, Diem's leadership style was more the norm than not in Southeast Asia during his era,¹⁰⁶ a workable alternative to Communism that offered far greater freedoms and potential for progress. After Diem fell to an assassination plot in 1963, South Vietnam's political leadership degenerated into a series of coups and counter-coups until stability was restored under the leadership of Nguyen Van Thieu in 1967—a fact that underscored the importance of Diem's ability to create stability there.

The Eisenhower administration, as well as the following Presidential administrations which served during the Vietnam War era, correctly assessed the nature of instability in South Vietnam as a problem stemming not from Diem or Saigon but rather from Hanoi.¹⁰⁷ It is now almost redundant to articulate the nature of those activities. This chapter has demonstrated clearly that Communist Vietnam created problems where there were none, inflamed small problems into very large ones, and prolonged troubles in order to destroy the Government of Vietnam. Misrepresenting its own policies and intentions, Hanoi effectively coopted dissent in

the South and thereby destroyed the productive energies of reform that could have aided the people of South Vietnam. Breeding apathy and opposition in the South, Hanoi not only impeded reform there but also prolonged the war.

Strangely enough, many critics of the war have pinned the blame on Diem for the aforesaid problems even though Hanoi's historians have admitted their own culpability in creating much of the instability in South Vietnam. The same critics use the instability of South Vietnam as proof of the illegitimacy of the Diem regime rather than its victimization.¹⁰⁸ But what nation on earth could remain stable through an externally-fed insurgency that had a logistical system protected by "neutral" locations and sanctuaries, all fed directly by the combined might of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China? Would even the United States have remained "stable" in the 1960s given a similar threat on its soil and that fact that protests rocked the country at that time?

However, in 1958 Hanoi gained the consent of the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China to use its "consolidated power" to launch a covert invasion of the South.¹⁰⁹ Infiltrating through the Ho Chi Minh trail in "neutral" Laos, the North Vietnamese began what amounted to an attempt to destroy the government of South Vietnam through the genocide of its local leadership. To accomplish this task, the North relied on guerrilla tactics and nighttime infiltrations into the many villages throughout South Vietnam—a situation that uprooted its entire village life and created nightmare-like conditions for its people. Douglas Pike captured the enormity of the undertaking:

Potential opposition leadership was the NLF's most feared enemy. Steadily, quietly, and with a systematic ruthlessness the NLF in six years wipe out virtually an entire class of Vietnamese villagers. The assassination rate declined steadily . . . from 1960 to 1965 for the simple reason that there was only a finite number of persons to be assassinated. Many villages by 1966 were virtually depopulated of their natural leaders, who are the single most important element in any society.

They represent a human resource of incalculable value. This loss of South Vietnam is inestimable, and it will take a generation or more to repair the damage to the society. By any definition, this NLF action against village leaders amounts to genocide.”

But behind these cold facts lurked grim details of executions of real people with remarkable personalities and warm faces who graced the very essence of village life in the South. Le Ly Hayslip detailed one such episode, the extinguishing of the life of a school teacher who had meant much to her. She noted that painful moment:

The first time I saw a Viet Cong fighter close up it was just about dark and I was cleaning up our kitchen. I happened to gaze out the window to the house next door, which (although it was owned by Manh, who had been my teacher) was often used by villager for gambling. Without a sound a half-dozen strangers scampered into Manh’s house and then shouted ‘Nobody move!’ The oil lamp in Manh’s window went out and people began running from the house. . . .

Manh was the last one out, led at gunpoint with his hands atop his head. I could hear his familiar voice arguing with the strangers: ‘But—I don’t know what you’re talking about!’ And ‘Why? Who told you that? . . . Suddenly one of the strangers barked an order in an odd, clipped accent (I found out later that this was how everyone talked in the North) and two of his comrades prodded Manh to the edge of the road. I could still hear Manh begging for his life when two rifle shots cut him short. The stranger then ran a Viet Cong flag up the pole that stood outside our schoolhouse and left as quickly as they had come. The leader shouted over his shoulder: ‘Anyone who touches that flag will get the same thing as that traitor! . . . ‘My teacher—’ I said, suddenly aware of the catch in my throat, ‘they killed him! The Viet Cong shot him! But he was nice to us. He never hurt anyone!’¹¹⁰

Although the Communist Vietnamese went to great lengths to publish the “justness” of these executions of “traitors” and “puppets,”¹¹¹ the fact remained that the targets were often the very best people of the village or hamlets. Communist strategy underscored the need to eliminate rival leaders foremost. The best along with the worst were often prime targets. The worst could be easily eliminated because little popular opposition impeded such a task; the best had to be eliminated because they posed the biggest obstacle to the successful establishment of

Hanoi's authority. In the late 1960s, a Communist Party leader who ordered such assassinations noted:

In Thuan's case this was an easy decision to make. He was a greedy, self-serving individual who wasn't popular with the villagers. Had he been well-liked, it would have been harder for us. Before killing someone who was popular, we'd have to try to do something to discredit him. Executing someone would always instill fear in people. But if they liked the individual, if he was a good man, it would also turn their hearts against the revolution.¹¹²

These Communist guerrillas therefore commonly targeted school teachers, religious leaders, and people of integrity and honor.¹¹³ Pike underscored another example, a beloved Catholic priest who "was ambushed by guerrillas at the edge of Konela village. A roadblock stopped his car. He was taken from it, and the guerrillas drove bamboo spears into his body. Then the leader fired a *coup de grace* into his brain."¹¹⁴

But Communist guerrillas targeted other civilians in the South for execution. Those who "collaborated with the enemy," refused to obey the orders of the Vietcong, and left the Communist movement also fell into disfavor with the Party and became subjects of Hanoi's wrath. In fact, the Communists executed peasants and other civilians who carried out orders ineffectively or who came under the mere suspicion of the Party.¹¹⁵ Therefore, civilian deaths commonly marked the village landscape in the South, evidence of the activity of the Communist Party that left a trail more visible than their shoe prints which often vanished into the jungle night. An American journalist remarked during this period of the early 1960s:

When we got to Dam Doi it was just ghastly. The Viet Cong had taken twelve or thirteen of the people they'd executed and laid them out like the spokes of a wheel around a flagpole and on the flagpole they had raised the red, yellow, and blue Viet Cong flag. Naturally they had booby-trapped the flagpole too. At least half of the bodies had their arms tied behind their backs. The slaughter had happened about three days earlier so the whole village was just one great mass of bluebottle flies and the stench was unbearable.¹¹⁶

As reprehensible as any act of the “revolutionary” forces in the South was the frequent killing of women and children. Acting in cold blood and calculated fashion, these “liberators” reasoned that the execution of these young and hapless victims would weaken the Southern government and therefore would aid the cause of the people.¹¹⁷ But the targeting of women and children revealed not only the grisly political objectives of Hanoi but also the sophisticated military tactics that marked its insurgency. Colonel Lansdale described the political-military rationale behind some Communist guerrilla attacks:

The Civil Guard had post housing a squad, platoon, or company in strategic places throughout the country. These outposts were homey affairs, in which the Civil Guard police lived with their families. . . . Apparently the Communists guerrillas notice this homey touch, also, and devised a tactic incorporating it. One group of guerrillas would fake a noisy attack on a village, to lure the Civil Guard police out of their outpost. When the police rushed to help the village, another group of guerrillas would move in on the outpost, murdering the women and children left there. It was a brutal Pavlovian lesson, conditioning the Civil Guard not to go to the aid of villagers but to stay and guard their families in the outposts. With no civil Guard protectors, the villagers became easy prey for the guerrillas.¹¹⁸

But the potency of the Communist guerrilla forces transcended military tactics and involved careful political calculations that reached deeply into the international scene. In late 1960 Hanoi announced the formation of the National Liberations Front, commonly called the “Vietcong.” The DRV falsely depicted this organization as an independent political group in the South that resisted the Diem regime and fought for freedom and justice.¹¹⁹

This political “face lift” for North Vietnam’s insurgency in the South allowed Hanoi to gain some political distance from its activities, effectively covering its tracks while coopting more Vietnamese under the nationalist banner. Ho Chi Minh’s lieutenants followed the announcement with a propaganda campaign that underscored this “heroic struggle of the Southern people.”¹²⁰ Although few scholars today hold to the false notion that the NLF was

independent of Hanoi, during the war many pundits, dignitaries, and celebrities embraced Hanoi's lie that the Vietcong were indeed independent and fighting for their freedom.

By 1963 the number of those assassinated from these terrorist activities of the Vietcong amounted to 6,700 in addition to 18,200 kidnapping, a staggering figure made even more gruesome by the fact that many had lost loved ones or had lived to witness these crimes against humanity.¹²¹ North Vietnam's use of the National Liberation Front as a "revolutionary" force involved in a "civil war" helped deflect attention from the real origins of the conflict and therefore mitigate the revulsion nationally and internationally to these political massacres orchestrated by Hanoi to conquer the South in the name of Marx, Lenin, and Soviet Russia.¹²² The DRV indeed succeeded in its plan to "can" the war as anything but what it really was: a Marxist-Leninist revolution using class purges to gain power and extending the international influence of Communism.

Yet, as troubling as events were in South Vietnam in the fall of 1960, President Eisenhower deemed the Communist activities in Laos to be even more problematic.¹²³ Since the Geneva Accords of 1954, North Vietnam's aggression in that obscure land progressed rapidly, and coupled with the geopolitical problems unique to Laos, complicated the politico-military options available to Washington's policymakers. Meanwhile, the Communist Pathet Lao, who were no more than puppets of Hanoi, gained significant advantages in the political as well as military fields of Laos.

Although the history of these activities in Laos are confusing because of rapidly changing events, frequent splintering of political groups on the right and the center, similarity of names, and concealment of Communist activities, Hanoi's overall strategy was vividly apparent. North Vietnam's strategy involved four major goals. First, the DRV understood that the northern

provinces of Laos (Phong Saly and Sam Neua) were critical for the development of logistical avenues to the South: The Ho Chi Minh trail. Second, the non-Communist government and forces of Laos must be weakened, according to Hanoi's thinking, so that the logistical support could continue uninterrupted and that Laotian forces could not effectively support South Vietnam.¹²⁴

Third, successive victories for the Pathet Lao in Laos (political and military) would set the stage for a later drive by North Vietnam to seize control of that country. Fourth, the further development of the Communist insurgency in Thailand, particularly among the large Vietnamese Community and the impoverished northeastern zone, would likewise weaken Laos by tying down Thai support as it battled an insurgency on its own soil.¹²⁵

Immediately after Hanoi signed the Geneva Accords of 1954, the Party's war architects set themselves to the task of expanding the Communist insurgency in Laos. Similar to its tactical withdrawal from South Vietnam after Geneva, the DRV left a skeletal force in Laos during the same period--once again flouting the Accords which called for a complete withdrawal.¹²⁶ The Pathet Lao found NVA soldiers and cadre not merely advising but training, coordinating, equipping and managing military affairs in Laos--integrating the Pathet Lao into the operational plans of the NVA.¹²⁷

Hanoi also clarified the objectives of the Pathet Lao after Geneva, communicating in certain terms that the mission and duty of each soldier was to continue the revolution in Laos. A Vietnamese training officer informed Pathet Lao soldiers:

We know that there has been an announcement that the Lao people have been united. This does not mean that the war is over. It is only a temporary cease fire--but the struggle continues. You know that Souphanouvong has no hand in the government. He is just considered a representative of the NLHS. Many members of his party have not been admitted into the government. We are training you so that you will replace the two battalions--the only force of the NLHS--in case they

are destroyed by the Americans. All of you must remain here and continue your training.¹²⁸”

During the years immediately after the Geneva Accords, Hanoi took advantage of the increasing power of the combined NVA and Pathet Lao forces in eastern Laos and labored arduously to build the Ho Chi Minh trail through this region in preparation for the invasion of South Vietnam and further insurgent activities in Indochina. The expansion of the Ho Chi Minh trail in preparation for attacking the South was a major event for the North, commemorated in its history books as such.¹²⁹

Pathet Lao leaders did not stand idly by as their Vietnamese comrades labored on Laotian soil. While pledging loyalty to the King of Laos, these Laotian Communists consolidated their Party apparatus, resisted integration into the Royal Lao Government, and expanded their military forces--all in violation of their pledge and the Geneva Agreements.¹³⁰ Propaganda condemning Western imperialism, American greed and corruption, and aristocratic power in Laos had a powerful influence on the natives there and had garnered increasing numbers of supporters. Royal and nationalist forces in Laos gave the Communists any easy target on this matter as American and French aid earmarked for anti-Communist activities furnished these allies of the West with the means to purchase homes, cars, and luxury items indicative of a profligate lifestyle.¹³¹

Meanwhile, Pathet Lao forces attacked the outposts of Royal forces, seeking to gain a military advantage, to guard the consolidation of the eastern provinces, and to resist a diminution of power from an outside influence. An American journalist described one such attack:

A fortnight ago the Pathet Lao, some 3,000 strong, attacked the royal army's 600-man garrison at Muong Peun, which lies between 8,000-ft. peaks in a bowl-shaped valley reminiscent of Dienbienphu. It was two days before news of the attack reached the King. When it did the royal Laotian general staff dispatched an airborne battalion, the army's entire mobile reserve. As red-bereted Laotian

paratroopers floated down on Muong Peun, the Communists withdrew to encircling positions, apparently intending to attack again at a more propitious moment.¹³²

After the Pathet Lao had consolidated its power in the eastern provinces—with the help of its ally, North Vietnam--these Laotian Communists got involved in a political shoving match with the Royal Lao Government. The 1957 agreement to “neutralize” Laos and form a coalition government between Royal Lao and Communist political parties soon broke down and gave rise to the leadership of Phoui Sananikone—a right-wing nationalist who refused to allow the Communists to continue to subvert Laos. The Laotian Communist had won electoral seats and had penetrated the government through subversive activities but refused to turn over its two battalions to the Royal Army troops. The Royal troops attempted to surround both battalions and disarm them but failed to do so as most of these Pathet Lao soldiers slipped into North Vietnam where they found protection under Hanoi’s wing.¹³³

In 1959, that political shoving match lead to not only a fight between these rival forces but also the intervention of North Vietnam, which invaded Laos and extended the power of the Pathet Lao. Spearheading attacks and then quickly withdrawing as Pathet Lao forces continued these military operations, the NVA forces effectively aided its ally, remained ready to support these operations, and allowed the Communist Laotians to gain the victories that they were unable to achieve on their own abilities. Subsequently, the Pathet Lao grew in power and prestige after proving that it had a “big brother” in the form of North Vietnam, who was not going to allow anyone to push around its Laotian comrades.¹³⁴



Pathet Lao guerrilla forces, 1953

But the Pathet Lao had an even bigger brother who was also ready to enter the fight: the Soviet Union. The nationalist forces of Laos had become fractionalized as some chose to support the coalition compromises that had proven futile in the past and that had been underscored by the Communists as a ploy to subvert the host government; other nationalist forces in Laos rejected a coalition government with the Communists and received abundant aid from Washington for that choice. Angered by the U.S. aid to his opposition, Prince Souvanna Phouma petitioned the Soviet Union for aid and continued to advocate a coalition government

with the Pathet Lao. Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev, who had boasted that Laos would fall into the Communist camp “like a ripe apple,” watched the matter carefully.¹³⁵

However, the Soviet premier was not willing to wait for the harvest season to bear that red fruit, but rather he relied upon the trusty Communist axe to chop down the apple tree—the revolutionary methods that had yielded significant results. After boasting that Moscow had undertaken the largest airlift operation since the Bolshevik Revolution, excluding World War II, the Soviets used the incident as a pretext to direct military and economic aid to the Communist Pathet Lao.¹³⁶ The airlift, grand and determined though it was, immediately drew the United States toward conflict in the region and with the Soviets.

Much had changed by the fall of 1960 when America looked to a new Presidential leader and war hero to solve these problems in the remote and mysterious lands of Southeast Asia. Suffering with debilitating back pains from a World War II injury, that man, John F. Kennedy, entered the Oval Office not only as the youngest American president in United States history but also heavily sedated at times and struggling just to straighten his back. His challenge in the following months however would be to stiffen his resolve and not just his back. For war had come again to Southeast Asia and “peaceful activities” had ripped apart the Geneva Accords and had placed real peace far beyond the reach of the nimble fingers of diplomats or the good intentions of international conferences.



**President John F. Kennedy
Addresses the Crisis in Laos**

Chapter 5

“Of Mud and Men”: Geography and History as Beginnings



**Defense Secretary Robert McNamara, GEN Maxwell Taylor,
and President John F. Kennedy**

President John F. Kennedy's leadership of the United States had been so charismatic that some observers of the American language note that the very word "charismatic" was not used widely until that senator from Massachusetts occupied the Oval Office. Unfortunately for the United States, his Vietnam policies lacked the vigor of his personality and his rhetoric. After choosing South Vietnam as the area to build a defensive line against Communism in Indochina, the young President committed major errors in military and foreign policy, which created tragic outcomes for the rapidly escalating war in Vietnam. Kennedy resisted the advice of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and adopted a "static defense," which allowed Hanoi to freely consolidate its

gains in the North and to continue its subversive and low-intensity operations in the region, a position further strengthened by the option of dictating the offensive, the very time and place of aggression. Thus North Vietnam had gained the initiative in offensive operations and the freedom to use Laos, and later Cambodia, for vital logistics. In 1963, the assassination of the President in Dallas, Texas thrust Vice President Lyndon Baines Johnson into not only the leadership of the United States but also of the war in Vietnam.

Many historians who have studied President Lyndon Johnson and the Vietnam War have not been shy about detailing the fact that he likewise made major strategic mistakes. The President's frustrations and fulminations over the war in Vietnam contrasted the ease and mastery that he possessed when dealing with domestic politics, particularly his handling of the United States Congress. This big Texan who skillfully worked the politics and pressures of that institution to his advantage found the Communist challenge in Vietnam to be beyond his easy grasp—a situation that deeply disturbed America's highest official.

*Assessments of President Johnson's Vietnam policies often conclude that he "limited" the war in Vietnam in order to prevent it from escalating into a global confrontation of superpowers: The United States, the Soviet Union, and China. However, the President did not "limit" the war in Vietnam as many commonly believe today, implying that both enemy and friendly forces mutually limited their actions or that the United States simply matched in kind the aggression of Communist low intensity warfare, creating a symmetry of forces that would check the North while keeping the war from escalating. Rather, the Commander in Chief **unilaterally** limited America's war against the determined forces of Ho Chi Minh and thereby created a major strategic advantage for the enemies of the United States in Indochina. The North*

Vietnamese held no such concept of limitations, marveled at his failure to understand the very basics of warfare, and quickly exploited the strategic advantage created by Johnson's ineptitude.

The imbalances in strategic power were striking. While America under Johnson refused to invade North Vietnam and occupy its territory, the North conducted a covert invasion of South Vietnam that nibbled away at its territory, ending with the outright military annexation of that entire region in 1975. Furthermore, while large deployments of U.S. ground troops did not base themselves or operate at length in "neutral" Laos and Cambodia, Hanoi defiantly did so. The Vietnamese Communists conducted major military operations there for decades and based in Cambodia the headquarters for Vietcong military forces (Central Office for South Vietnam), moving thousands of troops through and in these areas as North Vietnam created permanent logistical systems and military posts in that region—all in violation of the Geneva Agreement of 1954 and of the will of the majority of Laotians and Cambodians.

As Hanoi's military and political planners "thrust the dagger at the heart" of South Vietnam, as they stated, and thus targeted its civilian population and its critical infrastructure, U.S. planners refused to strike at the North's equivalent. The China buffer zone, Hanoi and vicinity, the Red River dikes near Hanoi, the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), port of Haiphong, major population centers, all remained intact under Hanoi's protective care--vital organs of the ferocious little dragon in the North that breathed its Red flames on the non-Communist neighbors to the south and west. [President Richard Nixon later reversed this policy and struck at North Vietnam's military industrial complex, its logistics, and its ports.]

In the meantime, something more valuable than human life was lost by President Johnson's Vietnam policy: TIME. The prolonging of the war meant more American and allied blood would be spilled under a scorching Southeast Asian sun—and the sacrifice of the brave

would diminish in value as Hanoi was allowed to prolong its war of aggression against the South. The passing of time and the inconclusive results that accompany indecisive action wore down the morale of American soldiers and service personnel in Vietnam as well as the will of the American public, which became increasingly vulnerable to the mainstream media's disinformation campaign and to the specious arguments of the Left.

State Department official Roger Hilsman, who served during the administration of President Kennedy and briefly under Johnson, remarked about this problem even while Johnson was Vice President:

In a corner of the office of the Secretary of State stood an old grandfather clock, one of a number of pieces of early American furniture that had been donated to the Department of State. To me, at least, the ticking of this old clock, which seemed slower and more deliberate than any I had ever heard, fixed the Laos crisis of 1961 in my memory. For each time the discussion again reached its dead end of hideous war or ignominious and far-reaching defeat, the silence was filled with that slow deliberate tick . . . tock . . . tick . . . tock . . . and with each silence the ticking seemed to me to be louder, slower, and even more deliberate.¹³⁷ Yet many Americans willingly served under these challenging circumstances and refused to overlook Communist aggression, knowing well the terrible costs of an enemy victory, costs that were later evident in the slaughter and the totalitarian repression that occurred in Indochina—as well as the loss in American security and prestige abroad.

Our veterans' service in Vietnam and during the Cold War is an inspiration for today, when America finds itself facing yet another difficult challenge to its security and its life.

The “mud and men” of Vietnam--its remarkable geography and history--played a major role in the development of this war that drew the United States into two decades of conflict. As many Americans gazed in wonder at the rising tensions, violence, and involvement of the United States in Vietnam during the 1960s, images and sounds that often reached a television audience

during the evening news, the land of Vietnam quickly became the main stage where the United States performed most visibly before the world President John F. Kennedy's pledge to aid "those peoples in the huts and villages across the globe struggling to brake the bonds of mass misery."¹³⁸

Beside the backdrop of elephant grass, rice paddies, and bamboo, peasant homes called "hooches," stood youthful American soldiers clad in green, who carried the mission and the affections of many of their countrymen--and thereby made the stakes personal for those at home. Against American soldiers stood the wily and elusive Vietcong, dressed in "black pajamas," who hid in the jungles, rice paddies, and nights, exploiting a familiar terrain while inflicting damage on American and South Vietnamese soldiers and civilians. For many Americans, their first encounter with Vietnam began with a curious if not apprehensive look at the land, history, and people of Vietnam--a culture that influenced markedly the lives of those who served there. Vietnam was indeed a distant land that few average Americans understood well.¹³⁹

But this generation that began to abandon Brylcreem hair grease for the "dry look" soon found that America's news media encased these startling images from Vietnam as much as boxy lacquered consoles carrying the Zenith logo encased television screens of families which gathered in their living rooms to watch entertaining Westerns like "Gunsmoke." CBS' beloved and paternal anchorman Walter Cronkite, whom historians would later conclude had influenced American history more than any other media figure, recognized that "TV became the greatest mass marketing medium in the world."¹⁴⁰ Cronkite added further that the advent of color television during the time, coupled with the unprecedented and unrestricted opportunity for the media to access a war zone, highlighted the realities of the Vietnam War by transforming its

black and white television images in which “blood could look like mud.” For color television demonstrated vividly to the world, he explained, that “blood was blood to all who saw it.”¹⁴¹

Cronkite needed no such technological change in public communications to alter mass perceptions of the mud and men in Vietnam. While claiming that his news coverage of Vietnam “showed it all,” he nevertheless exercised the editorial liberty to focus on alleged American shortcomings while minimizing the far greater atrocities of the enemy. His focus skewed public information, redirected America’s attention in the wrong direction, and allowed the Vietnamese Communist to accelerate the agenda of subjugating all of Indochina under Hanoi’s rule. Cronkite, although leading a trend, certainly was not the sole culprit among the media.

By the early 1960s the television media, along with the press, had become so powerful that President John F. Kennedy’s administration refused to confront these self-professed guardians of public information even though their false reporting and presumptuous conclusions about Vietnam had become too commonplace. Fearing that a fight with the media was unwinnable, that young President acquiesced to the media’s increasing assertiveness and irresponsibility.¹⁴² Disgruntled over the failure of “reform” policies aimed at appeasing the press, Kennedy’s Press Secretary recoiled at the activist agenda pursued by several prominent *New York Times* journalists:

When we get to the political situation, however, Halberstam, Sheehan, and Browne are on far less favorable ground. The three reporters devoted their activities in 1963 to the political crisis which developed in Saigon—particularly the nasty conflict between the government and the Buddhists. Whether they intended it or not, their articles reflected the bitter hatred they had for the Diem government and their avowed purpose (stated to a number of reporters in Saigon) to bring down the Diem government. It is a deep question of reportorial ethics whether the destruction of a government is within the legitimate framework of journalistic enterprise.¹⁴³

Given such power, and the ability to place Washington on the defensive throughout the war, the media made sure that the images of Indochina and the history of the Vietnam War (no matter how fresh at the time)--“the mud and men”--were the product of back office newsrooms rather than unbiased journalism.¹⁴⁴ These news assembly lines discarded honest investigations of the Vietnam War as scrap material while fabricating stories, images, and interpretations that created a public information deficit on that subject that is evident to this day.

OF MUD . . . Vietnam’s Geography as Beginnings



Yet Vietnam remains an intriguing land that attracts attention for its beauty as well as for its war that ravaged that beauty. The Vietnamese often compare the shape of their land to two rice baskets at opposite ends of a pole carried by a peasant woman.¹⁴⁵ That is to say, the long and slender central highlands of Vietnam appear as a pole that supports two baskets, the fertile Red River delta in the north, and the Mekong delta in the south. This country has three distinct regions: Tonkin in the north, Annam in the center, and Cochin China in the south. Furthermore, most of the people in that nation live in the deltas and along the coasts. The Red River delta is one of the most densely populated agricultural areas of the world. In relationship to the United States and the Western Hemisphere, Vietnam is situated on the latitude where its most northern point passes between Miami and Havana; the south inhabits the same latitude as Panama.

Many Americans during the 1960s remained unaware of the fact that Vietnam's size was approximately that of New Mexico or Germany. Vietnam's coastline extends nearly "1,400 miles, longer than the coastline of California and roughly the Atlantic Coast distance between Boston and Miami."¹⁴⁶ Another popular misunderstanding during that time was that Vietnam was a small nation. On the contrary, in terms of population Vietnam's presence in mainland Southeast Asia dwarfed its neighbors in Laos and Cambodia. The population of Vietnam rivaled that of industrial nations of Europe and furnished Hanoi's armies during the war with a seemingly endless supply of fresh recruits who had just reached the age of eighteen.¹⁴⁷

The topography of Vietnam is likewise noteworthy. Trees and tropical vegetation cover four-fifths of the country, a vegetation so thick at places that "triple-canopy jungles" emerge, the very backdrop that became familiar landscape for many of our soldiers. In fact, nearly half of the country is jungle. Over forty percent of the land is unpopulated; such areas in the south are

commonly “covered with jungle, elephant grass, and swamps.”¹⁴⁸ Journalist Bernard Fall noted about the terrain:

As one approaches it from the air—whether from Hong Kong to Hanoi, the northern capital; or from Bangkok or Manila to Saigon, the southern capital—one sees vast expanses of lush vegetation or endless rice fields stretching the metallic mirror of their flooded surfaces to the horizon during the rainy season, or presenting the velvety green of growing rice at other times. About 80 per cent of the country is covered with trees or brush, and 49 per cent of that is high-stand tree cover or outright jungle. The remainder consists of the open plains of the rice-bearing deltas.¹⁴⁹

In addition to these geographical traits, Vietnam possesses a harsh climate compared to that of the United States. The country is located entirely in the tropical zone where humidity remains commonly around 90 percent in ground areas like Da Nang and often wore down even the strongest American soldiers and rotted their clothes and boots.¹⁵⁰ Moreover, monsoon weather limited the use of some heavy weaponry, on which the United States and South Vietnamese forces relied, and taxed heavily these soldiers, who often carried sixty-pound backpacks. In contrast to this situation, these natural elements posed less of an impediment to the Vietcong, who fought with far fewer encumbrances and used lighter weaponry. American and South Vietnamese aviators alike complained about the tropical monsoons, which created “pounding rains, dense fog, and treacherous winds [that] caused many fatal aircraft accidents.”¹⁵¹

The Communist forces in Indochina relied much on the terrain to counter American superiority in firepower. Ho Chi Minh asserted that the proper use of terrain was among “the three factors for victory” when conducting war against the French and, by extension, the United States.¹⁵² Following Ho’s lead, in 1966 a Communist propaganda source boasted about the advantages of using the terrain against the Americans and noted that “. . . the population, the terrain and the climate are not favorable to them; their modern armament and technique have not

proved as efficacious as they had expected, and consequently, their strength has been very substantially reduced.”¹⁵³

The Vietcong demonstrated this priority for using the terrain by utilizing it for ambushes, booby traps, and concealment of supplies, bases, logistics, and deployments to and from battles. For example, the Vietcong used water buffaloes to transport artillery and other weapons because these farm animals could navigate the muddy trails and fields made by monsoon rains and could travel where American trucks and jeeps could not.¹⁵⁴

However, American forces overcame these obstacles by employing a variety of technologies, military tactics, and political-military measures. United States helicopters deployed rapidly to battle sights in conjunction with troop support and often negated the tactical surprises of the enemy. These “airmobile operations,” conducted by such famous air cavalry units as Colonel Hal Moore’s 1st Cavalry Division, assaulted the enemy while artillery, jet fire, and helicopter gunships raked their positions with devastating firepower. A local Vietcong commander remarked about these helicopter assaults:

If we failed to conceal our footsteps on a path, the helicopters would have spotted them. The Americans’ greatest success at that time was two armed helicopters from the 25th Aviation Battalion—Cobras—on the front of which were painted the pointed teeth and red mouth of a magical beast; we called them the red-headed beasts. They had two gunners—blacks—who were excellent sharp-shooters. Just a glimpse of us they swiveled their gun pods to shoot and kill instantly; many of our soldiers died. They flew low and fast and were deadly accurate.¹⁵⁵

In addition to battle tactics, the United States Air Force used C-123 aircraft in a defoliation operation from 1962 to 1970 called “Operation Ranch Hand.” Though Operation Ranch Hand has now become the subject of much controversy because the herbicides used, such as Agent Orange, caused harm to both the enemy and allied forces, there is no doubt that the

operation saved American lives by destroying the vegetation used for cover by the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese.

By the beginning of the 1970s the Vietcong found it very difficult to not just hide but survive. Allied forces had effectively isolated these guerrilla insurgents and had destroyed many of their hideouts, bases, and personnel. Despite the enemy's tenacity, their future looked quite bleak later in the war. An American intelligence source noted in February 1970:

From our perspective, the Communists are in trouble in South Vietnam. Their casualties still exceed their infiltration and local recruitment rates. The quality of their forces is also declining, and the VC forces continue to depend heavily on NVA support. The morale of Communist cadres and soldiers has declined further. Their already troublesome supply problems are complicated by Cambodia's variable attitude toward the movement of Communist materiel across its territory. Large areas of the South Vietnamese countryside are being denied to them, and this reduces their access to manpower and economic resources. These losses have also reduced Communist capabilities to maintain an effective political apparatus and to proselytize and gain political support.¹⁵⁶

During this period, counterinsurgency operations such as the Phoenix Program proved to be highly effective at minimizing the ability of the Vietcong to exploit the terrain. This counterinsurgency program excelled at information gathering, infiltration of Vietcong units, identifying their members, and disrupting their activities.¹⁵⁷ The Phoenix Program relied upon espionage, covert activities, and assassination of the Vietcong. Devised by Robert Komer in 1967, a former Central Intelligence agent and associate of General William Westmoreland, the program "neutralized" over 60,000 Vietcong, aided in the disruption of their entire organizational infrastructure and thus forced the Vietnamese Communists to rely on conventional forces instead of insurgent activities.¹⁵⁸

Perhaps one of the greatest victories of the United States and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces, which typified the ability to negate the enemy's tactical use of the terrain, involved the destruction of the Cu Chi tunnels located near the infamous Vietcong

stronghold known as the “Iron Triangle” twenty miles from Saigon. American and allied forces destroyed both the tunnel system and the enemy personnel that operated in the area of Cu Chi.

The Vietnamese Communists constructed these underground tunnels at Cu Chi during the Franco-Vietminh War (1946-1954) and later utilized them during the fight against the United States. Part of a larger system that stretched hundreds of kilometers, “connecting villages, districts, and even provinces”¹⁵⁹ these tunnels posed a formidable threat to Saigon’s security as well as the entire Cu Chi area. Containing living areas, storage facilities, munitions factories, and hospitals (among other features), the Cu Chi tunnels were used by these “human moles” to conduct a variety of guerrilla operations, which prolonged the war and bolstered the efficacy of the insurgency in the South. Today, the Vietnamese use the tunnels as a monument to the bravery and dedication of the Communist insurgents who fought and died at Cu Chi.¹⁶⁰

This elaborate tunnel complex, and others like them, became pivotal in the elusiveness and effectiveness of the enemy’s guerrilla operations. The Vietcong hid these tunnels so well that American servicemen occasionally walked over them unaware that the enemy was only a short distance away, perhaps thirty feet below their boots. The Communist insurgents found physical refuge as well as emotional comfort in these tunnels. A petite Vietcong woman named Tran Thi Gung remarked about the Cu Chi tunnels: “The Cu Chi tunnels had such small openings it was very rare for a shell or bomb to land right in a tunnel. As Uncle Ho said, ‘A stork can’t shit into a bottle, so with our tunnels we shouldn’t be scared of American bombers.’”¹⁶¹

One American commander noted an incident where one his “snuffies” [a marine infantryman] found a similar tunnel complex in central Vietnam that served as the enemy’s

command center for the Hue-Danang-Chu Lai area. He remembered the surprise and the elaborate construction of the tunnel:

Two snuffies . . . decided to entertain themselves with a Frisbee. They tossed it back and forth until it went over one kid's head and landed in a clump of bushes. When he went to retrieve it, lo and behold he spotted a hole. He enlarged it with his K-Bar and sure enough it opened into a tunnel. It turned out to be one of the many entrances to a cave that was the Quang Da Special Zone headquarters for the Hue-Danang-Chu Lai area.

We got into this thing and I have never seen anything like this. They must have worked with coolie labor for years. It was a big, big cavern. They had bunks made of bamboo and wire that could sleep two hundred troops. They had running water through bamboo pipes. They had bamboo baffles to dissipate smoke in various locations so you wouldn't be able to see when they cooked. They even had a special room for the commanding officer.¹⁶²

Despite the cleverness, elusiveness, and determination of those who lived and fought in these tunnels, the story ends in bitter defeat for them. When American and ARVN forces applied effective firepower on these tunnels and against these insurgents the enemy's deaths and casualties were staggering; allied forces destroyed their bases, disrupted their operations, and made a material change in favor of the United States and South Vietnam.

The Tet Offensive of 1968 provided U.S. and allied forces the opportunity to use that effective firepower. The Cu Chi tunnels were a major staging ground for the disastrous adventurism conducted by Hanoi during the New Year's celebration of that fateful year, which the Vietnamese call "Tet Mau Than" [Year of the Monkey].¹⁶³ The Vietcong gambled that a major offensive would not only bring military victories but also cause the collapse of the government of South Vietnam, which tottered on its foundation of corruption, oppression, and unpopularity, Hanoi believed. The surprise attack during this festive moment resulted in a slaughter of the Vietcong, a decimation of their entire organizational strength as the superior firepower of U.S and ARVN forces crushed the offensive.¹⁶⁴

American B-52s, deployed in the aftermath of Tet, dropped their devastating payloads on this tunnel complex in addition to other targets in South Vietnam. The application of overwhelming force proved to be an effective solution to the problem of the tunnels. Unfortunately, the indecisiveness of Lyndon Johnson's administration delayed the use of this force, costing unnecessary death and suffering.¹⁶⁵

The victory was nevertheless sweet for the those who served in Vietnam in the late 1960s. Mangold and Penycate described that outcome:

In Cu Chi and the Iron Triangle there was, by 1969, little vegetation left and few people; only a handful of guerrillas hung on in conditions of extreme privation in the tunnels. For them, the most destructive of the B-52s' bombs were those fused to explode, not in the air or on impact, but after they had penetrated several feet into the ground. The explosion from one of these created a local earthquake that collapsed the sturdiest of tunnel walls. The resulting craters, which still deface the landscape, were up to thirty feet deep—huge pits that sliced into the tunnel system, making it unusable and irreparable. 'A five-meter hole could be sufficient to destroy a tunnel,' said Major Nguyen Quot. 'B-52s bombs make holes twelve meters deep.' Air holes were blocked by debris. When the tunnel system was blocked in several places, air could no longer circulate and the inmates suffocated. Carpet bombing by B-52s gradually succeeded where the CS gas and demolition charges of the tunnel rat had failed—denying the use of the tunnels of the Viet Cong.¹⁶⁶

Despite the popular notion to the contrary, the Vietcong and North Vietnamese suffered much from exposure to the physical elements of their own country. A misconception commonly found in many histories of the Vietnam War depicts the Vietnamese Communists as battle-hardened inhuman creatures who moved easily among jungles and rice paddies, the very cradle of their civilization, which allegedly gave birth and character to these people and forged them into natural guerrilla fighters.

This popular myth has become ingrained in the rationale of those who seek simple explanations for "America's defeat" in Vietnam. Yet more than a few testimonies from modern

Vietnam have reported a far different story. Robert Templer noted this fact in his study of postwar Vietnam, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam*:

But for the Vietnamese soldier, the jungle was no easier a habitat than it was for the Americans. Vietnamese are more used to cities and paddy fields than the mountains of the Central Highlands. Thousands died of malaria and almost all suffered other illnesses and permanent hunger. Bao Ninh, a former North Vietnamese soldier who wrote the acclaimed novel *The Sorrow of War*, described the forests of central Vietnam as alien and morbid, a world of phantoms and damp nocturnal terror. 'Here when it is dark, trees and plants moan in awful harmony. When the ghostly music begins it unhinges the soul and the entire woods looks the same no matter where you are standing. Not a place for the timid. Living here one could go mad or be frightened to death.'

Bao Ninh and other writers have punctured many of the inflated ideas we have about Vietnamese soldiers; these myths were a comforting fiction for Americans—that they were up against an almost inhuman and unbeatable enemy.¹⁶⁷

Although stories of clever usage of the terrain for guerrilla activities permeate the history of the Vietcong, episodes that involve deadly ambushes and “melting back into the populace or countryside,” the political exploitation of geography rather than the physical use of it was a far more important factor in their operations and success. The jungle and mountainous areas of Cambodia and Laos provided the North Vietnamese and Vietcong with an effective base area for conducting guerrilla activities against the South and moving large amounts of troops and supplies, particularly through the Ho Chi Minh Trail. Although both Cambodia and Laos declared “neutrality” in the war, the North Vietnamese and Vietcong illegally used these border countries as a major staging area for their military operations—a pivotal aspect of their military strategy.¹⁶⁸

The fact that the United States under the Johnson administration recognized this “neutrality” and refused to conduct major operations against these bases gave the “revolutionary” forces a significant advantage over South Vietnamese and American combatants. Guerrilla

fighters often attacked ARVN and U.S. soldiers and then retreated to Cambodia or Laos where these insurgents were impugned from retaliation.¹⁶⁹

The issue of the Ho Chi Minh trail was certainly a decisive point in determining the outcome of the war, and President Johnson should have never conceded this strategic advantage to the enemy. The North Vietnamese knew that well and conducted many of their military operations in Indochina with the express purpose of preserving that logistical system.¹⁷⁰

In 1995, when asked about war-winning issues of the “American War,” former North Vietnamese Colonel Bui Tin replied: “Cut the Ho Chi Minh trail inside Laos. If Johnson had granted [Gen. William] Westmoreland’s requests to enter Laos and block the Ho Chi Minh trail, Hanoi could not have won the war.”¹⁷¹ Furthermore, President Johnson compounded the problem of allowing enemy logistics to operate freely when he ordered the tactical bombing of these strategic targets—an inaccurate use of firepower that often missed the mark--thus failing to make a material difference in the flow of supplies from Hanoi to the Vietcong in the South.

However, when Richard Nixon won the presidential elections of 1968, Hanoi’s confident reliance on the Ho Chi Minh trail was shaken.¹⁷² The following year, shortly after President Nixon ordered the secret bombing of the Trail, Chinese foreign minister Zhou Enlai warned Hanoi that Nixon would make a major effort to interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail. He cautioned Hanoi’s visiting delegation:

New developments have been seen in Indochina. We have to acknowledge that Nixon is more intelligent than Johnson. He established diplomatic relations with Cambodia and recognized Cambodia’s borders with the neighboring countries. As far as the situation in Cambodia is concerned, we are not as optimistic as you are. Even though [Sihanouk] carries out a policy of double-dealing, he is tilting to the right. The US also knows that China is supplying materiel to forces in South Vietnam via Cambodia and that the NLF armed forces are using part of Cambodian territory for their operations.¹⁷³

Yet, in the end, it was not a guerrilla force that entered Saigon and capitalized on a geographical advantage. Rather, it was an invasion of conventional forces—tanks, armies, trucks, and artillery pieces—that streamed into South Vietnam at the behest of Hanoi and toppled the capital of free Vietnam and thus concluded the war. But it was that logistic system used in the Ho Chi Minh trail, in large part, that allowed Hanoi to carry the war to the South and divert attention away from its buildup of conventional military forces which were later used to invade the South.

For Vietnam veterans the physical environment of Vietnam has personal significance that transcends these geopolitical considerations. One of the many ironies of the Vietnam conflict was that more than a few American soldiers stated after the war that the beautiful geography of Vietnam--its exotic sights, smells, and sensations--struck them immediately upon arrival in that land and created vivid memories that have endured to the present. Michael Herr remarked in *Dispatches*:

Once in some thick jungle corner with some grunts standing around, a correspondent said, 'Gee, you must really see some beautiful sunsets in here,' and they almost pissed themselves laughing. But you could fly up and into hot tropic sunsets that would change the way you thought about light forever. You could also fly out of places that were so grim they turned to black and white in your head five minutes after you'd gone.¹⁷⁴

John Pratt remarked similarly in the preface of his study entitled *Vietnam Voices*. He recalled: "When those who were there remember the Vietnam War, what they think about most are sights, sounds, smells, and feelings. The nighttime beauty of someone else's firefight, the red dust, leeches . . . the Vietnamese children—all these images are a part of what they still see."¹⁷⁵

For many of the 2.5 million Vietnam veterans who returned home from the war, the physical environment of Vietnam created far more than just harmless personal memories of a time and place that was unique in its beauty and its sensual appeal. Nearly half a million of these

men and women experience a debilitating psychological and emotional disorder called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹⁷⁶ While the symptoms of PTSD vary among many veterans, the manifestations include “severe depression, intense anxiety and panic attacks, explosive and aggressive behaviors, recurrent battle dreams and nightmares, sleep disorders, interpersonal problems, severe startle reactions, hallucinations, and somatic symptoms.”¹⁷⁷

Veterans with PTSD re-experience the traumas of the war through dreams and nightmares, and sometimes memories triggered by sensations similar to that of the war experience. For these veterans, “the beginnings to the end” seem endless. And American society has been less than responsible in its duty to foster a community of support and healing for these soldiers and service personnel who served their country during difficult times.

While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully narrate the struggle of Vietnam veterans with PTSD against an often disrespectful and ungrateful American public, or the emotional struggle of all veterans of that war against the same, a few summary words are necessary for an accurate history “of the mud and men” in Vietnam. Many veterans who began their service to America in Vietnam hoped to arrive back in the United States and appear before a grateful public just as their parents’ generation did in preceding wars. Unfortunately for them, and for America, these veterans faced the scorn of a significant segment of the country that protested the war.¹⁷⁸

Amid the shouts of “baby killer” and “murderer,” veterans encountered acts of violence from “the generation of love” that included urine-filled balloons (or condoms) hurled at veterans as they departed from their return flights and began the difficult adjustment to civilian life. These abuses were particularly troubling for veterans with PTSD.

But far more damaging to the dignity of veterans with PTSD, according to many of their testimonies, was the fact that American society ostracized these soldiers and coldly passed over their service to the country. PTSD was only recognized officially in 1980 by the American Psychiatric Association, and help for veterans with the disorder arrived slowly--and often with much criticism.

Although veterans of other wars in American history, including the Civil War, have experienced symptoms of PTSD, many in the media, political world, and mental health field have harmed the dignity of Vietnam veterans by depicting their psychological difficulties as freakish, peculiar to their war service and not other eras. Eric T. Dean's study of PTSD, *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War* (1997), asserted that Vietnam veterans have been portrayed as "as tragic actors in a flawed opera" but in reality they have coped with their difficulties as well as other veterans and possibly better.¹⁷⁹

But Hollywood tends to disagree with that assessment. Tinsel Town's version of the American soldier returns from Vietnam to find that "nothing is over--nothing!" "You just don't turn it off," according to a shouting John Rambo, the main character of the movie *First Blood* (1982). Sylvester Stallone, who plays the character of John Rambo, stands as a well-chiseled living monument that was crafted not in the dignity of service to the American flag which he wears on the breast of his army coat, but in the pain and suffering of an unjust war. His tight, scarred frame imprisons the violent emotions that a cruel civilian world will certainly unlock, for "there are no friendly civilians," Rambo barks back to his former commanding officer who questions his rage. *First Blood*, nearly all 96 minutes of the movie, is a venting of that rage amid explosions, machine gun fire, and dramatic chases that violate the passive-aggressive complacency of a small northwestern town brought to its knees as his final victim of PTSD.

However, the social forces harming Vietnam veterans with PTSD reach far beyond this important segment of the military community. American society has nurtured a defamatory ethos which encompasses the lives of all Vietnam veterans, much to their harm and to the harm of the country. The same nation that asked these men to fight has failed to uphold the public duty to support those who fought and has failed to understand the reasons why they fought. Instead, an uninformed or uncaring public has allowed an ideology, a leadership, and an institutional framework to create a dogmatism, a culture of error and guilt that spreads myths about the war in Vietnam—myths which spread a cynical and hopeless message for present and future generations while vilifying the motive and conduct of our Vietnam veterans.¹⁸⁰

If we could treat our study of Vietnam veterans as a criminal case, we would find not only the wounds among our soldiers but also the weapons that have inflicted these wounds. Perhaps no other weapon wielded by society against these men and women of uniform is as evident as the ideology used to destroy the patriotic motives and service record of our veterans. The message often asserted by the mass media, popular press, academic world, Hollywood's movies, and misinformed public directly assaults the minds of veterans by claiming they had misguided motives, fought needlessly, and thus supported a bad cause. Many within the health care field have even determined that "patriotism," the very motive of many of these veterans for fighting in Vietnam, is a pathological mental illness.¹⁸¹ Unfortunately, many veterans have believed these lies—in whole or part--and have suffered with guilt and depression for that reason.

In general, three cynical messages emerge in public discourse regarding the mud and men of Vietnam. First, anti-Vietnam war voices have told America that Vietnam veterans relied on a false patriotism that has been manufactured by society or worse, manipulated by the government.¹⁸² Second, these former soldiers hear repeatedly that the Communist Vietnamese

enemy was justified, either by their sincerity, their nationalism, or by their determination to their cause. For instance, journalist Malcolm Browne remarked about the war:

Maybe there are a couple of ways to look at it. One is to suppose that there were two sets of good guys, one led by John F. Kennedy and the other by Ho Chi Minh, who were equally convinced that the other side was the bad guy. . . . Vietnam was like the Battle of the Somme in 1916: a conflict in which a lot of fine people on both sides were killed in vain. Like the Somme, Vietnam has no appreciable effect on history, except to remind survivors that war is tragic business never to be undertaken lightly.¹⁸³

Browne, like so many others in his field, never seriously considered that Ho Chi Minh's "good guys" had enslaved themselves to a murderous ideology that robbed life and liberty while challenging the interests of the United States. Hanoi's supporters were not that, and at the very least not the problem of the United States—according to the ideology of the anti-war people and journalists like Browne. Furthermore, such assessments hide from the realities of Vietnam's post-war life, which has indicated that totalitarianism and human suffering follow the Hammer and Sickle just like it had in other Communist countries.¹⁸⁴

Third, the anti-Vietnam War voices portray our veterans of that era as the victims of the United States Government or other alleged "destructive forces" coming from America or the war effort.¹⁸⁵ That is always the main issue, the only real issue, and the Communist challenge was marginal, if at all important, according to these critics. America's shortcomings, mistakes, and problems are the central issue--according to Liberals, "peace advocates," "professors," and others--and dominate all other issues, no matter how real or important, putting them into the background of oblivion. Conveniently forgotten by these anti-war and peace advocates is the death of 94 million people, murdered by Communism through its bloody history, and the fact that nearly four times as many people perished during the twentieth century under totalitarian

and authoritarian governments than all the wars of that century--Communism being the worst of these inhumane systems.¹⁸⁶

For these critics, prioritization of issues is never a real consideration, comparisons between Communist systems and non-Communist ones, never a serious thought, and correcting the problems of war while continuing the fight is never an option. The answer was and is quit, pull out, and abandon the “bad war.” This anti-war ideology relies on emphasis and focus while detracting from critical issues so that they remain submerged in silence and distraction.

For example, as the war in Vietnam escalated during the 1960s “the credibility gap” developed between the Presidents of the United States and the American public. Many critics of the war accused Presidents Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon (as well as earlier presidential administrations) of not telling all the truth because they knowingly (or unknowingly) underestimated the seriousness or magnitude of the war and the commitment needed to win.¹⁸⁷

Rather than providing constructive and remedial measures through accurate journalism and political commentary, the media used the issue as a means to attack the presidency and the war effort. The press and television journalists did not inform the American people that the Communist enemy in Indochina was far more determined than most thought, far more dangerous than assumed (by Washington or elsewhere). Instead, the media used that credibility gap to minimize the Communist challenge and depict Washington as the main threat to public security in the United States. “That became the main story,” Walter Cronkite declared.¹⁸⁸ The switch was as devious as it was destructive, and did much to harm the war effort.

In fact, some American military leaders believe that the media’s exploitation of the “credibility gap” cost America the victory in Vietnam by seriously eroding public support for the war.¹⁸⁹ After Hanoi’s Tet offensive failed to achieve its objectives, and the Vietcong losses

totaled over 37,000, Walter Cronkite would not emphasize these disastrous losses of our enemy. Rather, Cronkite centered the news on the failure of Washington and General William Westmoreland to accurately predict the enemy's offensive military capabilities, which manifested itself during Tet. Cronkite who had no military experience beyond his news coverage of WWII, no training in counterinsurgency, no understanding of asymmetrical warfare or Communist diplomacy and negotiation tactics, declared shortly after the Tet offensive of 1968:

To say that we are mired in stalemate seems the only realistic if unsatisfactory conclusion. On the off chance that military and political analysts are right, in the next few months we must test the enemy's intentions in case this is his last big gasp before negotiations.

But it is increasingly clear to this reporter that the only rationale way out then will be to negotiate, not as victors but as an honorable people, who lived up to their pledge to defend democracy, and did the best they could.¹⁹⁰

The presumptuous news commentator was completely unaware that the Communist concept of "negotiations" never entailed compromises or minimizing military solutions, and was a means for Hanoi to intensify its combat operations and increase its position on the battlefield. Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Armitage (2001-2005), who had a distinguished military service record in Vietnam, later commented on Hanoi's negotiation tactics: "We entered negotiations with the Communists without understanding that in their view negotiation means 'What is mine is mine and what is yours we will talk about.' To us, compromise is an honorable and reasonable process. To Communists, compromise is weakness."¹⁹¹

Despite Cronkite's pessimistic prognostications, foreign experts on guerrilla warfare like Sir Robert Thompson advocated continuing the war but with major strategic and tactical changes in political-military doctrine. Thompson warned against "a bombing pause" or a "negotiated

peace” with a belligerent Hanoi, noting that these means will jeopardize security and not enhance it.¹⁹²

Cronkite’s public and untimely renunciation of the war seriously eroded public support for the conflict in Indochina, discouraged the Commander-in-Chief Lyndon Johnson, lessened the ability of the United States to apply the use of force, and thus provided the additional impetus to strengthen North Vietnam’s ability to manipulate the peace talks later held in Paris.¹⁹³ The bombing pause that immediately followed allowed North Vietnam to rebuild its crippled military and economic infrastructure, justify its cause domestically and internationally, and later mount a series of invasions that eventually toppled South Vietnam in 1975.¹⁹⁴ Cronkite if not killing the war effort certainly wounded it terribly--and during a time when public support was critical.

But credible histories of the Vietnam War have questioned not just the media’s analysis of the news but also the motives of those who report the news. Lt. General Phillip B. Davidson noted in his study of the war that Cronkite during his investigation of the Tet offensive intentionally concealed information about North Vietnamese atrocities. He then told an American general that “he (Cronkite) had decided to do everything in his power to see that this war was brought to an end.”¹⁹⁵ General Davidson added further about the news media’s manipulation of the Tet offensive: “Howard K. Smith of the American Broadcasting Company said of the television network’s coverage during this period, ‘Viet Cong casualties were one hundred times ours. But we never told the public that. We just showed pictures day after day of Americans getting hell kicked out of them. That was enough to break America apart.’”¹⁹⁶

However, this ability to obstruct America’s foreign policy objectives does not remain in the past. The anti-war voices have turned these events from the Vietnam War into “lessons” for future application, and thus ensure that past errors are repeated. For example, journalist

Seymour Hersh, with little consideration that his cynical message could undermine national security in the future, continues to assert “the credibility gap.” He remarked:

The Pentagon Papers show how Presidents Kennedy and Johnson lied to the American people and to Congress about the origins of the war. I can think of no more important lesson—that we cannot trust our leaders to send us to kill and be killed with all the truth about our involvement. All the lies and all the dead Americans—and Vietnamese—to support a notion of anti-communism that may not be valid. Shameful thinking.¹⁹⁷

Moreover, the anti-war voices often rose to leadership of their generation and perpetuated the myths of the Vietnam War with renewed fervor. Senator John Kerry serves as an example, as do many others like him. Although much has been written about Kerry’s service record and his subsequent activities related to the protest movement, the real story is with his ideology of the war. For Kerry’s military experience, though important, affected far less than his anti-war message, which reached his entire generation and continues to influence national security decisions.

Fresh from the mud and men in Vietnam, Kerry joined the anti-war critics and vehemently condemned the United States, American G.I.s. in Vietnam, and the policies and practices of both. In order to bolster his argument against American involvement in Vietnam, Kerry picked up the trite discourse of the antiwar movement and denied the very essence of the war by claiming Communism was not the real issue—an act that detracted from the spirit of his comrades who routinely faced terror tactics conducted against themselves and civilians. Despite the billions of propaganda books and war materiels distributed worldwide by the Communist bloc—much of which ended up in Vietnam, Kerry stated about Communism in Southeast Asia: “I think it is bogus, totally artificial. There is no threat. The Communists are not about to take over our McDonald hamburger stands.”¹⁹⁸

Though Senator Kerry has denied his earlier record of portraying American G.I.s in Vietnam as a barbaric killers and war criminals, his testimony to the U.S. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations on April 23, 1971 clearly stated these allegations while underscoring that “these were not isolated incidents but crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command.”¹⁹⁹ He clarified this point at the hearings:

They [soldiers] told stories that at times they had personally raped, cut off ears, cut off heads, taped wires from portable telephones to human genitals and turned up the power, cut off limbs, blown up bodies, randomly shot at civilians, razed villages in fashion reminiscent of Ghengis Khan, shot cattle and dogs for fun, poisoned food stocks, and generally ravaged the countryside of South Vietnam in addition to the normal ravage of war and the normal and very particular ravaging which is done by the applied bombing power of this country.²⁰⁰

Kerry carries his erroneous ideology from the Vietnam War into modern foreign policy issues such as the present war in Iraq, where he carries out a similar policy of support, withdrawn support, and then leadership of the opposition. The Senator from Massachusetts is not shy about making comparisons between Vietnam and Iraq.²⁰¹ Whether regarding Vietnam or the Iraq War, Kerry--like many others of his kind--places more guilt, negative attention, and responsibility for problems on the United States government rather than the enemy.

Along with these leaders are “fallen leaders,” the men and women who led the United States into the Vietnam War but later repented of their involvement, ideology, and policies. These fallen leaders have done much harm to the dignity of both the United States and the Vietnam veteran. Former Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara serves as the most obvious example, but others include George Ball, Clarke Clifford, McGeorge Bundy, and Chester Cooper.

“Yet we were wrong, terribly wrong. We owe it to future generations to explain why,” MacNamara said in his book *In Retrospect* (1995), his cathartic regrets about the Vietnam

Conflict.²⁰² These words that affronted our veterans are now found in a war museum in Hanoi, along with the book, displayed near pictures of Americans torturing Vietnamese and other potent “justifications” demonstrating the alleged evils of the American War.²⁰³

American tourists need not worry about the incriminatory evidence offered by Hanoi. On one occasion when I was in Vietnam between 2000-2001, I found a “history book” of the war that showed a picture of an “unidentified American general” leading an invasion force in Vietnam, dramatized with a beach pictured in the background. The American general pictured by Hanoi was none other than Hollywood actor John Wayne!

Yet those who fought in the war know that these men who have abandoned the cause never had the convictions, character, and courage to uphold the higher values of the United States in the face of an aggressive enemy. Falling under the pressures of time, careers, and frustrations, these men likewise deny the obvious challenge of Communism in order to justify their new positions. Bui Tin remarked about McNamara’s apology:

MacNamara] clearly failed to realize the arbitrary, undemocratic, and Stalinistic nature of the North Vietnamese regime: he was thus unenlightened and unfair. Unfair also was his condemnation of the American supporters of the war, his claim that ‘we were wrong, terribly wrong’—for it is no less clear that these pro-war elements had a point when they were opposed to the expansion of international communism, especially in its Stalinist guise.²⁰⁴

Far too few are the voices who remain committed to the principles of the past which understood North Vietnam’s brutal and aggressive political system that threatened human life, human rights, as well as American interests. One of the few who had led the United States in the Vietnam War era and has not forgotten the stakes and the cause is W.W. Rostow, former National Security Adviser during the Johnson administration. Rostow’s message is far different from some of his contemporaries like McNamara and Cooper. In 1995 the “hawkish” adviser stated about the Vietnam War:

No one has promised that American independence itself, or America's role as a bastion for those who believe deeply in democracy, could be achieved without pain or loss or controversy. The pain, loss, and controversy resulting from Vietnam were accepted for ten years by the American people. That acceptance held the line so that a free Asia could survive and grow; for, in the end, the war and the treaty which led to it were about who would control the balance of power in Asia, an issue which was evidently at stake in the Asian crisis of 1965 and thereafter. Those who died or were wounded in Vietnam or are veterans of that conflict were not involved in a pointless war.²⁰⁵

Anti-Vietnam war ideology and the poor leadership of “fallen leaders” are not the only factors that have harmed the well being of our veterans and our country. The anti-war generation has not faded away but has imbedded itself in our most important institutions: our educational system, our media, our government, and our entertainment industries. For instance, the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW) remain active in political life and in opposition to “future Vietnams.”²⁰⁶ The result of that entrenchment in American public life is that the message spawned in these institutions and taught to our children and next generation of American leaders is almost always tacitly pro-Communist (pro-enemy) and anti-American.

Hollywood delights in its productions of anti-Vietnam War movies. These movies often portray the American GI as a crazed and sadistic killer, a rapist, a foul-mouthed moron addicted to drugs and pawned off to the field of battle where distant bureaucrats and a calloused military play with his life and mind for no good reason.

The movie *Platoon* (1986) is typical of Hollywood’s vilification of the U.S. military. The character “Bunny,” played by actor Kevin Dillon, personifies the so-called cruelties of the American soldier in Vietnam. His glassy eyes and distant look trail the course of human interactions always a fraction too slowly, impeded by the ignorance that finds such deep affinity with the violence occurring in abundance in Vietnam. As his rifle butt crashes against the skull of the defenseless young peasant under his boot, Bunny flinches not at the splattered blood

striking his face and others. Instead he shouts to his terrified comrades nearby: “Holy shit did you see that fuck’n head come apart, man. I’ve never seen brains like that before, man.”

Bunny immediately follows physical abuse with verbal abuse of his defeated enemies while his sadistic smirk relaxes in the self-justification of this soliloquy delivered before the traumatized mother who dies and emotional death indicated in her wilted and catatonic state, where motherhood ceases but biological life continues. Her only crime, the production indicates, was having an inopportune moment of meeting Americans in the peaceful village which held the home of her family and the memories of her ancestors. *Platoon*’s audience, charged with emotions from two hours of Pavlovian cinema devoid of historical fact, finds the concluding words in the movie credits where fiction meets more fiction: “Dedicated to the men who fought and died in Vietnam.”

The duty of each GI in Vietnam, according to many Hollywood productions like *Platoon*, was never to serve one’s country and defend against Communist aggression. On the contrary, celluloid opinions flash into the minds of movie audiences and declare that the struggle in Vietnam was only to maintain one’s sanity and humanity from America’s “military industrial complex” and its war that had lost touch with reality and decency. *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *The Boys of Company C* (1978), *Casualties of War* (1989), and a host of other movies have saturated audiences with the same message.

In the movie *The Quiet American* (2002), there is no subtle message. The audience is led to believe that Communism is the only sane alternative to the policies of the United States in Vietnam, policies that deceive, manipulate, and ruin life and culture in Vietnam in a misguided fit of anti-Communism applied without reason or regard for human rights. For behind every misdeed, every pretense, every apparent logic of the war is the “quiet American,” a Central

Intelligence agent who controls reality according to his own warped perceptions of American hegemony.

The madness of an American world implanted in Vietnam cries for a justice that Communism offers--according to the dramatic conclusion of *The Quiet American*--to free Vietnam from a bastardization born of an illegitimate relationship of East and West. Thomas Fowler, the main character and British journalist played by actor Michael Caine, finally emerges from his disillusionment created by a violent Southeast Asian world scripted by American intrigue. He is given “the facts” of the war in Indochina through his soft-spoken confidante, a Communist plant, who speaks slowly and secretly to him: “Sooner or later Mr. Fowler, one has to take sides if one is to remain human.”



Fowler's transformation of self from a state of disillusionment to a state of enlightened humanity involves complicity in the assassination of the quiet American, who falls under the blade of his Communist nemesis, as the book on the subject is closed--metaphorically and literally. The dead body of the quiet American floats peacefully in Saigon's waters as a sacrificial offering to the gods of the far Left, who reward both the Communists and the British journalist with a sense of peace and knowledge amid the turbulent world of Vietnam.

The intensity, pervasiveness, and popularity of the condemnatory anti-war message has certainly harmed our veterans and the spirit of our country. But the potency of this message transcends even these factors: for the anti-American, anti-government, anti-military, and anti-patriotism message has become dogma, a rigid doctrine asserted reflexively in crisis moments that our country now faces, such as the War on Terror, the war in Iraq, and other "flashpoints" in the world where the United States finds its interests threatened. "Faulty intelligence," "moral crusading," "creeping involvement," "quagmire," "hijacked by dictators," "no exit plan," "civil war," and a host of other voices call from the distant past of the Vietnam War era and find gullible ears from the halls of Congress to the cafeterias of our high schools where these terms are applied to the most pressing national emergency, the war in Iraq.

The mindless application by many of these slogans from the Vietnam War seem so identical, if not verbatim, to the past that one could easily believe that they are read from the very speeches of George McGovern, Jane Fonda, and Bertrand Russell. In one of the more ludicrous applications of the past, a dogmatic assertion of anti-war thinking, during a major news broadcast a young television journalist questioned whether America's invasion of Iraq, less than one month old at that time, was a "quagmire" because a sandstorm had temporarily delayed military operations—a ridiculous comparison to the Vietnam War no doubt. But she was not alone, a Left-

wing media, haunted by the spirit of Hanoi, likewise reported the theme of “quagmire” and ran with it.²⁰⁷

Some would call this effect “Vietnam Syndrome,” but in essence it is a testament to the degree in which the erroneous ideology of the anti-Vietnam War voices has infected the thinking of the present generation and has become dogma, asserted without qualification or reason. The fact that these slogans echoed the exact phraseology of Hanoi during the Vietnam War is of little concern to those who assert these “lessons.” The additional fact that these slogans are erroneous likewise causes little concern to the user.

The wounded Vietnam veteran now finds that his or her persecutor has also wounded America. The perverse ideology of the anti-war movement of the 1960s has become a pervasive culture that dominates much of modern political discourse and public life, saturating the country with a cynical and defeatist message.

Where peace, pride, and progress should mark the post-Vietnam War era, veterans from this time as well as other Americans find disillusionment, guilt, and hopelessness in the anti-Vietnam war culture. In fact, these pessimists have even glorified anger, rage, and violence as emotions of well-being for which the Vietnam War generation need not escape.²⁰⁸ For those who look to a better future, truth remains the essential ingredient for healing the wounds of the past, wounds that occurred on the battlefields of Vietnam and afterward in the battlefield of opinions in the United States.

OF MEN . . . Vietnam's History as Beginnings

But interpretations of the beginnings of the Vietnam War have used the long history of Vietnam possibly more than any other major aspect of the war—including geographical factors.

“Know thy enemy” has become an essential truth necessary for victory in combat and often quoted by military strategist dating from ancient Chinese master of warfare Sun Tzu.²⁰⁹

Civilizations and nations possess “personalities,” general characteristics that are necessary for determining the practicability of policies and of the potentiality of success. Vietnam’s history indeed created political and social conditions—legacies--that survived through time and that emerged during the war as influences, opportunities, and obstacles to America’s policies and operations. A basic understanding of these historical characteristics is therefore critical in the evaluation of American foreign policy in Vietnam--and likewise in the evaluation of Communist policies.

The Vietnamese people possess an extraordinarily durable culture and a distinct national identity that has resisted attempts to destroy or subvert it throughout history. Through study of the early history of Vietnam, students of history can witness the formation, assertion, and durability of this rich Vietnamese culture—and the sacrificial energies of the Vietnamese people to protect their uniqueness and independence. Vietnam’s early history can be divided into two major periods: Birth and Chinese domination [208 B.C.-A.D. 938]; and Independence [A.D. 939-1882]. The modern period likewise has two periods: French colonial rule [1883-1954]; and the Communist Era [1930-present].

Like many other civilizations, the beginnings of Vietnam are found in “the misty realm of prehistory,”²¹⁰ demographic factors (migrations of various peoples to Vietnam), and historical achievements that created legacies which these people of Southeast Asia used to build a common culture and a shared identity. The people commonly known today as Vietnamese date their origins from thousands of years ago when the intermingling of Chinese settlers from the north, Indonesians from the south, and Thai from the west began to create a distinct society.

The natural boundaries created by the mountains of the Central Highlands, which run northwest to southeast, facilitated the migration of Chinese settlers, giving them a predominant geographical advantage, while simultaneously blocking western influences from India. “Thus, the Vietnamese have always felt the intense pressure of China’s civilization and, on occasion, its military might.”²¹¹ But it was Chinese warlord Trieu Da who in 208 B.C. gave a name and beginning to the Vietnamese when he declared himself the ruler of southern China and Vietnam as far south as Da Nang, calling this region Nam Viet, “land of the southern Viets.”

In 111 B.C. the Han Dynasty conquered the Viet people and ushered in a millennium of Chinese rule and influence, but not without much resistance by the Vietnamese people. Chinese rule brought many contributions—Confucian ideology and education, improvements of the economic infrastructure (construction of roads, canals, and harbors), agricultural techniques, and land reclamation projects that utilized dikes and dams. However, these gains did not offset the exploitive economics and abusive policies of Chinese rule.

High taxes levied on the peasants, forced labor, and forced conscription into provincial militias created a popular resentment of Chinese control and soon aroused the fierce spirit of independence of the Vietnamese, now famous for its determination and sacrifice.²¹² During the Han Dynasty’s conquest of Vietnam (100 B.C. to A.D. 102) a Chinese historian remarked about the ancient Viets: “The Viets are disdainful, belligerent, astute in military matters, and not afraid to die. They live in the mountains yet move about on water, using boats as vehicles and oars as horses. When they come, it is like a gentle breeze; when they go, it is hard to catch up with them.”²¹³

One of the first major revolts against Chinese rule came from the Trung Sisters. A newly-appointed Chinese ruler executed a Vietnamese aristocrat with the intent of sending a

message to other aristocrats in Vietnam that submission to Chinese rule was the only sure means of personal safety. The wife of the murdered aristocrat, Trung Trac, infuriated by the atrocity, raised an army of vassals with the help of her sister Trung Nhi and overthrew the Chinese military garrisons. Shortly thereafter the sisters set themselves up as queens and proclaimed an independent kingdom for the Vietnamese people. The Chinese responded promptly by dispatching one of their best generals, Ma Yuan, who quickly subjugated the Trung's new kingdom. Rather than live in defeat and humiliation, the Trung Sisters committed suicide by throwing themselves into a river and drowning.²¹⁴

The Trung Sisters were by no means the only female warriors who resisted foreign domination. The Vietnamese today proudly call attention to other remarkable women patriots who demonstrated by their courage and audacity a character worthy of recognition for its justice and selflessness. Phung Thi Chinh, a supporter of the Trungs, engaged the Chinese on the battlefield while she was pregnant. She delivered her baby under the duress of the Chinese attackers who pressed the Vietnamese position. Remarkably, Phung delivered the baby, strapped the newborn child to her back, and picked up two swords, one in each hand; she then fought her way through the battle, finding a “bloody escape route” through the Chinese lines of attack.²¹⁵



No less notable is the story of Trieu Au, an individual that has been called “the Vietnamese Joan of Arc.” Trieu detested oppression, whether it came from the political control by the Chinese or by family members like her sister-in-law, whom Trieu killed while living with her as a dependent. In A.D. 248, the young Vietnamese revolutionary raised an army of a thousand troops, confronting her Chinese foes while clad in gold armor and sitting atop an elephant that carried her on the battlefield. Facing a certain defeat, she, like the Trung sisters, chose suicide rather than submission.²¹⁶

In addition to the strong spirit of female warriors and of Vietnamese resistance in general, the history of Vietnam demonstrates that their revolutionary activities relied upon guerrilla tactics as an effective means to fight outside invaders. The history of Ly Bon deserves the attention of serious students of the Vietnam War because his legacy is one of the most revered among the Vietnamese. In A.D. 543, Ly, an aristocrat of Chinese descent and a master military strategist, led a revolt against Chinese rule and achieved initial victories including the expulsion of China from Vietnam. Pursued persistently by the Chinese, Ly used tactical retreats, jungle cover, and Vietnam’s harsh climate to wear down his opponents.²¹⁷

But Ly’s victory was fleeting. Although the victorious guerrilla warrior had proclaimed himself emperor only a year after beginning the revolt, his enemies later pressed the attack and cut off his retreat into Laos, where tribal leaders there awaited his arrival. The Laotians killed Ly, decapitated him, and sent his head to the victorious Chinese general. The Vietcong made Ly Bon an example of excellence in guerrilla warfare and imitated his techniques.²¹⁸

However, guerrilla warfare did not always end in defeat for the Vietnamese. In A.D. 939 Ngo Quyen, the heroic leader who led the Vietnamese armies against the Chinese at the Battle of Bach Dang, successfully used guerrilla tactics which, among other factors, broke the yoke of

Chinese domination and ushered in the era of Vietnamese independence.²¹⁹ Once again, retreat, deception, and ingenuity emerged as chief characteristics of Vietnamese military strategy--a strategy that led to victory at Bach Dang.

Ngo lured the Chinese army near the Bach Dang River, where the Vietnamese had placed iron spikes during a low tide to wreck the advancing Chinese ships, which carried their soldiers. The spikes worked as planned, and Vietnamese soldiers fell upon the distressed Chinese and slaughtered them. Vietnamese celebrate the victory today and mark that point in time as the beginning of their independence.²²⁰

The Vietnamese people cherished the nine hundred years of independence that followed and ardently defended their freedom from foreign encroachment. Guerrilla battles against the Chinese continued and except for a brief time in the fifteenth century when China subjugated Vietnam and made it a vassal state, the Vietnamese successfully defended their independence. In 1284 the Vietnamese, under the dynamic leadership of their best general, Tran Hung Dao, defeated the invading Mongolians who had an army of 500,000.²²¹

What was particularly impressive about the Vietnamese victory was the fact that not only had the Mongolians during the reign of Kublai Khan been one of history's most successful armies but also that Tran defeated the Mongolians in identical fashion as the Vietnamese defeated the Chinese at Bach Dang, deploying iron-spikes which destroyed the Mongolian boats at a low tide.²²² From his deathbed years later, Tran urged the emperor of Vietnam to treat the people humanely; he stated that "the army must have one soul like the father and son in the family. It is vital to treat the people with humanity, to achieve deep roots and lasting base."²²³

The Vietnamese victories over their enemies also included more than just military triumphs. The Vietnamese resisted the attempts of China to destroy Vietnamese culture. In

addition to the assertion of Chinese culture over Vietnamese culture during the period of Chinese rule of Vietnam, the brief Chinese colonial rule in the fifteenth century brought yet another attempt to subvert Vietnamese life and manners. In 1407 the victory of the Ming Dynasty over Vietnam began a period of harsh repression which included attempts to deprive the Vietnamese of historical records, remove scholars and technicians, and issue identification cards to all Viets.²²⁴

The centuries of independence generated and nurtured a deeply patriotic and nationalistic sentiment among the Vietnamese people, a sentiment that reasserted itself throughout the time.²²⁵ Vietnamese parents taught their children the amazing history of the Battle of Bach Dang and of heroic leaders like the Trung sisters. These lessons inspired Vietnamese patriots, like Le Loi, who arose throughout the period and asserted the independence and resistance tactics of their predecessors.²²⁶ In 1428, Le became emperor and utilized land redistribution and justice as a means to rule and keep order. Despite the deliberate attempts of China to reassert their rule over Vietnam or destroy Vietnamese culture through systematic programs designed for this purpose, the Vietnamese remained independent.

Left to stand on its own, the history of Vietnam teaches the fact that Vietnamese people acquired social and political traits which endured through much of their history and to the modern era. In general, the Vietnamese relish independence and disdain foreign oppression. They likewise demonstrated a remarkable ability to unite beyond class lines to rally against their foes who attempt to subvert, dominate, or destroy their cultural uniqueness and identity. Moreover, these Southeast Asians are adroit guerrilla fighters with a patient resolve to continue their fight through adversity and time. Their excellence at guerrilla warfare is symptomatic of a

larger tendency for ingenuity and resourcefulness—survival skills. Indeed, the Vietnamese people desired justice and dignity, as many other peoples of the world.

Unfortunately for the history of the Vietnamese people and the beginnings of the war in Vietnam, many accounts of this rich history have not allowed these themes to stand on their own. Instead, historians and political parties have made Vietnam's past the object of their own biases, false pretexts for their own ideas about the war.

Although South Vietnam could be criticized rightly for not always upholding the best of their past, the North Vietnamese deliberately falsified their affinity with past and claimed to uphold traditions that they in reality intended to destroy or completely reorient along Communist lines: land ownership; respect for religious values; veneration of the family, and more.²²⁷

Ho Chi Minh's objective of destroying traditional Vietnamese culture was clearly evident in his political doctrine. In 1957 Ho remarked: "The North is in the transitional stage to socialism. The socialist revolution is the most difficult and far-reaching change. We have to build up a completely new society unknown in our history. We have radically to change thousand-year-old customs and habits, ways of thinking, and prejudices."²²⁸

Yet this destruction of the past did not exclude a reliance on using historical examples, manipulating Vietnamese tradition in order to achieve Party aims. For instance, the North Vietnamese held annual ceremonies to honor the Trung sisters and depicted these women as popular revolutionaries²²⁹ even though the Communist would have executed both of them because they were aristocratic landowners. Hanoi frequently used the example of historical revolutionaries to motivate revolutionary action. Ho beckoned his countrymen with words exhorting: "The sacred call of the fatherland is resounding in your ears; the blood of our heroic

predecessors who sacrificed their lives is stirring in your hearts! The fighting spirit of the people is displayed everywhere before you! Let us rise up quickly!”²³⁰ And again he stated:

Our Party is truly great. Here is an example of it; it is recorded in our history that a national hero, Thanh Giong, drove the invaders out with bamboo trunks. In the first days of the Resistance War, our Party led thousands, tens of thousands, of heroes to follow Thanh Giong’s example of fighting the French colonialists with bamboo spears.²³¹

But for many Vietnamese people, Hanoi’s campaign to reorient traditional Vietnamese tradition and values transcended mere notions of political doctrine. For the “revolutionary” practices of the North and its effect on Vietnamese tradition were painfully evident. Trin Do, a young Vietnamese from the South, recalled his horror when learning about the horrific campaigns of the Communists against innocent landowners during the 1950s:

Though some landowners were cruel to other peasants, most were innocent, kind people. Regardless, all were tried in the same kangaroo courts that the Communist cadres set up. In these trials, there was always someone planted by the cadres to come forward and allege crimes against the luckless landowners. Inevitably, all were convicted and most were condemned to death. . . . One day, I asked my mother if it was true that the Communists would kill all landowners if they were to control the country. Having seen the movie *We Want to Live*, I couldn’t understand why people could harbor such deep hatred and do such terrible things.

Surprised by my inquisitiveness, my mother sat down to tell me what she knew. The Communists did kill many landowners in 1952. Many Communist Party members were poor peasants, who were exploited by cruel landowners for a long time. That’s why they joined the Communist Party. The party promised them land and freedom if they were to control the country. The party worked up their hatred then manipulated other peasants to accuse landowners of crimes. No one dared to help the landowners. Anyone brave enough to do that would likely meet the same fate.²³²

In general, far too many non-Communist accounts of the Vietnam War have denied these realities and the Communist campaign to destroy Vietnam’s traditions. These non-Communist histories have often falsely depicted the social and political culture shaped by Vietnam’s history

as compatible (or more compatible) with Communism and Ho Chi Minh's revolution--and incompatible with South Vietnam's political designs and practices.²³³

Following the Marxist-Leninist line that capitalism creates a culture that pollutes society, these studies fail to realize the following: First, the traditional revolts against foreign domination included the leadership of aristocrats (Trung sisters), landowners (nearly all the leaders), and all Vietnamese (including an ethnic Chinese, Ly Bon), not the destruction of those classes and types by a peasant revolt led by a Communist-styled agrarian revolution.²³⁴ Second, had it not been for a deliberate falsification of Communist ideals by Hanoi, the people of Vietnam would have never supported Ho Chi Minh and his war.²³⁵

Despite the many incongruities between Communist ideology and traditional Vietnamese political and social values, many histories of the Vietnam War continue to carry the theme that the American war effort in Vietnam failed because it violated these values and alienated the populace. Critics have levied this charge against the strategic hamlet program, development of an urban economy and urban growth, and many other policies associated with nation building in South Vietnam.²³⁶

Frances Fitzgerald's *Fire in the Lake* has emerged as one of the chief source of this notion and has been accepted without much critical reflection for over twenty years. This study has had enormous influence on subsequent histories of the Vietnamese people and the war. Robert Templer remarked about the problems with Fitzgerald's thesis:

By presenting Vietnamese as mysterious Asian opposites of Americans, Fitzgerald no longer has any responsibility to find out anything more about them. Americans are caricatures of heavy-handed bellicosity; Vietnamese therefore must be contemplative and peace-loving. Americans are driven by a sense of historical mission; the Vietnamese are reduced to passivity by their lack of history.

Her ideas, presented in a ringing, authoritative tone but with only the sparsest evidence, say little about the Vietnamese. By presenting herself as a sympathetic liberal counterweight to those who wanted to bomb the country back into the stone age, she stakes a claim to explaining the ‘true nature’ of the people, a highly dubious intention in itself. Fitzgerald’s Vietnamese are devoid of all diversity or individuality; they remain trapped in fixed intellectual and physical landscapes, completely beholden to the ageless and unbending forces of Confucianism, colonialism, and village life.²³⁷

But possibly the most visible misunderstanding derived from the history of Vietnam alleges that Ho’s Communists were invincible or superior because of their reliance on guerrilla tactics and a fanatical zeal for independence. Many critics of the war allege that the beginnings to the end can be found in the simple fact that Vietnam’s history created a superior enemy.²³⁸ This theme underscores the point that guerrilla warfare always defeats conventional forces, like that of the United States, and that Vietnam’s history proved that point.

Similarly, because Ho Chi Minh incorporated the cause of independence and freedom from foreign control into his main message, he allegedly tapped the ancient energies of Vietnam’s traditions more effectively than his Southern opponents who relied on a vague notion of democracy and freedom for only a division of Vietnam (the South) and not the whole. Some scholars have taken the thought even further and have concluded from America’s defeat in Vietnam that any enemy who is “resolved” can defeat the United States at war.²³⁹

President Nixon addressed these very criticisms and refuted them effectively:

Vietnam did *not* prove that guerrilla wars are unwinnable or that ‘revolutionary’ forces are invincible. Quite the contrary: our side won the guerrilla war, and it was winning the conventional war until the United States pulled the rug out from under its ally by drastically cutting back supplies while the Soviets poured huge quantities of arms and ammunition into the arsenals of their ally. When that happened, Vietnam finally fell to the same kind of large-scale conventional assault we successfully repelled in Korea.²⁴⁰

The successes and failures in Vietnam were not contingent upon predetermined factors created by the geography or history of Vietnam. The rough, jungle terrain of Vietnam was certainly an

obstacle to American military forces but not an insurmountable one. Moreover, the extraordinary history of Vietnam created no affinity with Communism and no impediment to American involvement but rather an opportunity to carry out the highest ideals of that rich historical culture. The mud and men in Vietnam are then a story of challenges, challenges that these American soldiers and service personnel were willing to meet. For in the end, the warmth of freedom reached deeper into a soldier's life than the sweltering tropical climate of Vietnam.

Chapter 6

“Poster Child”: The Communist Victory in Vietnam



Nguyen is not much different from the many dark-haired middle-aged men in Vietnam today. The convulsive forces of Vietnam’s modern history have peppered the ancient towns and sunny streets of this sliver of Southeast Asia with such who struggle to find meaning for their lives lived amid the aftermath of decades of war and blighted hopes. Perhaps his self portrayal of a rugged individual is correct, and his thin lips framed by sharp facial features and a strong hair line reveal candidly a man who is indeed a survivor, a man who has managed by savvy and strength to make a living in the turbulent world of the Red River delta.

Indeed he is proud to be a self-made guide to many tourists who now come to Vietnam, partly to understand its past and forecast its future, partly to marvel at the beauty, and partly to

indulge in the deflated currency that maintains the crusty alleys and the commercial venues where one can cheaply consume the fresh economy and imbibe the fermented Franco-Vietnamese culture.

Perhaps again Communism, now stripped of its internationalist zeal and Soviet backing, lingers merely as the annoying odors near the rear of local restaurants where back-alley garbage mingles with the breath of steamy kitchens and the nervous perspiration of a tourist's misguided wanderings--a perchance encounter with an environment that only a few quick steps with discretely clenched nostrils can overcome. And Nguyen lives by his instincts which tell him when to close his nose but never his eyes.

Yes, Nguyen has distinguished himself among the many quasi-professional tour guides who casually mix in among Westerners, abruptly introducing themselves to their foreign guests with offers of a cheap and quick path to find the "yin and yang" of modern Vietnam--a cosmos where harmony exists between the inconsistency of a government which condemns capitalism but now courts its leaders and economic benefits with the same degree of zeal that once drove young North Vietnamese soldiers who chained themselves to their tanks as they assaulted the South and its "decadent feudal culture." Or maybe my guide has learned to smile back graciously at his country that now smiles to its people and the world like an older woman with a bad face lift trying to portray a youthful image that never was.



North Vietnamese Propaganda Poster

But I am thankful for Nguyen for shattering my academic understanding of Vietnam while not having to utter more than a few words: “Mr. Catino, where did you get that poster?” On the way to our rendezvous in the afternoon I had removed from a public street a government propaganda poster celebrating the twenty-five year anniversary of Hanoi’s victory over the “American imperialists and their puppets” (South Vietnam). The poster’s crude but active imagery and chalky colors showing Vietcong and North Vietnamese Army (NVA) forces streaming forward in the wind of tanks and helmeted heroes enticed my pedagogical desires for using this showpiece of history for classroom lectures.

“Students will love this imagery,” I thought as this rolled paper oddity protruded from my shoulder bag and bounced alongside my determination to hurry and meet my guide on time, who had just entered my sight. “It will add a striking visual dimension to my university lectures on

the Vietnam War,” my thoughts trailing as we connected at his favorite local café, replete with the same plastic chairs that one usually finds at a swimming pool in the United States. “At the wall back there . . . and also the European expatriates working nearby said that it was okay to take it from the wall,” I responded to Nguyen as he abruptly brushed aside my greeting and I answered his deeply probing question on the origins of the poster.

His fear-chiseled face then moved with strained dignity as he repositioned his gaze on me and retorted, “That is easy for a Westerner to say, but *they* will not come after them because they are Europeans. But they will come after me and my family.” Nguyen explained that “they,” the government of Vietnam, consider the removal of their posters to be an act of “treason,” punishable by severe measures—even death. “But I took the poster, not you!” I naively added. “That does not matter,” Nguyen answered, “They will seek a scapegoat rather than lose face or tourists.”

He next struggled to regain his composure with the same burst of increased urgency that a lion-tamer shows when performing in a cage after a brief bout of unexpected fear with his familiar but wild animal—a reminder of the nature of the beast as well as the danger of coexistence with it. Yet my guide’s fears began to dissipate steadily in the comfort of his own explanation which redoubled his conditioned and reflexive survival skills, a moment further relaxed by the disappearance of the poster from sight as he instructed.

Disappeared also through this experience and others like it were my naive assumptions held before my trips to Vietnam in 2000 and in 2001, assumptions that held that no matter how bad this political system was, the people of Vietnam could manage to survive peacefully by just remaining quiet, patiently awaiting reform while avoiding the obvious pitfalls of individualism,

self-expression, and uniqueness in a society that condemns these visible characteristics of freedom commonly practiced in the West.

But I was wrong. No one in Vietnam can find comfort in a capricious world where executions, tortures, and injustices occur as much from violations of draconian laws as from the whims and personal passions of the Party. My guide had revealed that he, like his country, was a poster child of Communism, a typical victim of abuse by a political system that had a long history of destroying not only freedom of the body but also freedom of the mind—leaving no space to find the peace that defines the quality of our human existence.

“Damned Johnson” and “the Right Thing”



President Richard M. Nixon and President Lyndon B. Johnson, 1968

But 1969 was a different time. The freedom to travel safely, to complain aloud, to disagree, and to hope were alive in Vietnam, not ranging peacefully as the water buffalo near long stretches of rice paddies where nature combed by strokes of human gracefulness rests harmoniously, but rather circumscribed by the borders of the South where a people's future remained kept like a wild life preserve under the careful management of an administration well of aware of the dangers beyond the barbed wires and protective walls.⁵⁶³

For the nation of South Vietnam had matured much from its infant days of the 1950s, had survived proudly the growing pains of its troubled youth, but had not reached yet the maturity of adulthood when it could face alone its neighborhood bully--North Vietnam--with the confident self reliance necessary to completely assume its independent role as a member of Free World society.⁵⁶⁴ Bristling like the new whiskers on a young man's face, the Government of Vietnam (GVN) was ready and willing to meet the North's challenge, which blocked the path to independent living as well as the dignity of achievement found in those ends.

Yet the Communist challenge that awaited South Vietnam's rite of passage to adulthood demanded the steady help and friendship of the United States just as the North relied on the consistent support of its comrades in Moscow and Peking. President Richard M. Nixon had pledged to give South Vietnam that support, a stand that earned him the respect of his allies, his military, and his nation, which granted him the right to sit in the Oval Office with the same integrity inherent in the principles articulated in his campaign promises pledging victory and "peace with honor" in Vietnam.⁵⁶⁵

But the Oval Office is a lonely place of leadership for those who want to uphold the mission aptly summed in President Harry Truman's words: "the buck stops here." Furthermore, the very best occupants of that office find that "the buck" has a natural ability to stop there and

then circle back around that office with a fury that makes its oval center more the eye of a tornado than a bulwark of stability.

President Nixon knew that, understood the challenges that lie ahead, and determined to face directly the political maelstrom surrounding the Vietnam War and his Oval office.⁵⁶⁶ While contemplating deeply on that subject in 1970 and peering through his window and through images of his future one evening, the angst of his visage entered the portal of memory of his colleague, H.R. Halderman, who noted that moment in his diary:

Before (President Nixon) left the office tonight he was standing looking out the window and said, 'Damn Johnson, if he'd just done the right thing we wouldn't be in this mess now.' This refers especially to the bombing halt, which (he) regards as a great mistake, because we could have closed the whole thing down if we'd stayed with it in 1968.⁵⁶⁷

Nixon was “the right thing.” He differed significantly from his “cursed” predecessor who lacked experience with foreign affairs but possessed a dangerous knowledge of Communism, enough information to know that it was a threat to be resisted but not enough knowledge to find the means to achieve victory over that threat—and thus harming those caught in the ineffective efforts of that aim.

Lyndon Johnson, a personification of the “pitiful giant” tormented by the conflictive characteristics of American power and powerlessness, lacked the keenness of mind to navigate through the fog of ideas clouding the minds and misguiding the muscles of many of his managers of the war in Vietnam, who were lost in the deceptive energies of retrogressive movements within the loose paradigms of defeatist strategies.⁵⁶⁸ Like a tired boxer unable to fight into the later rounds of his bout, Johnson (as well as his advisers) could no longer throw punches or rest on the ropes of his strategies, which had lost the tightness that allows a fighter to take a brief rest and then fight on.

However, President Nixon, drawing upon his extensive experience with international Communism, could look the enemy in the teeth and not become distracted by Red lips covering evidence that revealed unsightly pieces of a pernicious personality.⁵⁶⁹ Moreover, the thirty-seventh President of the United States knew his enemies well, the cynical media and many leading opinion leaders, whose arrogance of power created the self justifications for lending their powerful resources more readily to those who imposed rather than opposed terror and totalitarianism on the peoples of distant lands.⁵⁷⁰

Nixon's opponents, who ultimately witnessed the triumph of their policies regarding Vietnam when the United States Congress abandoned its allies in Indochina in 1975, did not merely call for the "cut and run" strategy abhorred by President Johnson and General William Westmoreland, who together had exited the Vietnam stage as heckled actors with shattered dreams and downcast countenances. For the strategy involved "cut, run, and *deny*," the last component being essential to justify the other two notions.

The anti-war movement called for nothing less than an immediate withdrawal from Vietnam ("cut"), the immediate return of all U.S. military forces from Indochina ("run"), and a stubborn denial (and later political amnesia) of the consequences of this action which harmed the safety and security of the peoples of Southeast Asia as well as America.⁵⁷¹ The denial, which crystallized from stubborn silence (on assessments of the consequences of a precipitous withdrawal) to open deception, remains today as the last policy implemented by the radical Left and its followers, whose literary feats resurrect decaying skeletal notions long buried in the dirt of Communist propaganda, where modern Vietnamese workers (and their helpers) taking their orders from Hanoi manicure such graves for the visual consumption of a global public.

Furthermore, Nixon refused to cover the baldness of Johnson's strategies with the bad toupee of policies worn by leading Democratic Congressmen, whose false and stiff anti-war ideology fit poorly the old contours of an insurgency requiring endurance, perseverance through adversity, and sacrifice as requisites for victory, but pleased the immature attitudes of an American leadership and public aged in freedom long enough to have known better. Likewise, the Republican President refused to feather his nest with the ideas of Congressional doves, whose fluffy policies of withdrawal could fly on the winds of defeat directly to his presidential predecessors and the Democratic Party, whom Nixon could blame for that outcome.⁵⁷²

On the contrary, the Commander in Chief proved his excellence in strategic planning by articulating a realistic foreign policy that smoothly blended the Vietnam War into a complex dish of global ingredients that included European resurgence, Soviet imperialism in the Middle East, the Sino-Soviet split, often fragile alliances with developing nations, and economic and social pangs in the American body politic.⁵⁷³

In contrast, the anti-war voices proposed simplistic policies that appealed only to the base appetites of a portion of the public that was willing to eat defeat like children eating cake at a birthday party--satisfied in the exuberance of the moment, fixated on the light of a few candles, content with a quick sugar rush that immediately follows, and then gently closing their eyes in the sleepy insulin deficit that ends the experience. Refusing to allow political pressures to imprison or incapacitate policy, the President based his thoughts as much on the breadth of geopolitical realities as the consequences of action and inaction within an emerging and volatile tripolar world.⁵⁷⁴

General Dwight Eisenhower's former Vice President was indeed no mean Cold War architect. For Nixon's triangulation--his zealous working of the trilateral relations consisting of

the United States, China, and the Soviet Union—cleverly placed this simple geometric political design on its apex, as the base fears and aggressions of the two former comrades provided the weight of force to drive the point into the thick hearts of Hanoi’s leadership, causing it to become troubled by these breaches in proletarian solidarity just as Nixon had planned.⁵⁷⁵

The Kremlin’s fears of its belligerent border brothers, coupled with Peking’s rabid animosity toward Soviet revisionism (subordinating Communist solidarity and ideology to Russian imperialism), provided enough evidence that the divisive pressures acknowledged by the Chief Executive would not abate quickly. In fact, Soviet aggression toward its former allies led by Mao Zedong became so intense during Nixon’s administration that Moscow’s strategists contemplated a preemptive nuclear strike on China in reaction to its military intrusions on Soviet territory.⁵⁷⁶

“The Middle Kingdom,” true to its mystical name which means that heavenly and earthly kingdoms are bridged by the alleged uniqueness of Han destiny and superiority, dug deeply into Peking’s cold earth and created a tunnel shelter that could hold thousands of its citizens in preparation for a nuclear confrontation with the Soviets. At the same time the kingdom reached into the heights of “spiritual” ideology as it threatened the Soviet Union with the forces of nearly a billion peasant martyrs, willing to sacrifice life and limb in the fiery trials of a nuclear holocaust.⁵⁷⁷ In February 1972 these very same nervous Chinese hands rolled out the Red carpet on the tarmacs near that city for the epochal moment when Nixon arrived in China to discuss the future of Sino-American relations and global security.

More than these realities of an old Cold War moved the thoughts and policies of the American President. Nixon’s philosophical embracement of self-reliance, conditioned by his generation’s struggles through the Great Depression, and later through World War II, caused him

to reject “welfare” military doctrines as much as “welfare” social policies--the very practices of his presidential predecessor who approached “that bitch of a war in Vietnam” (as he called it) and America’s ghettos like a good-natured Southern “Biddy” determined to get things done her way and her way alone.⁵⁷⁸ Nixon knew that the war in Vietnam could only be won through the self reliance of the South Vietnamese, who would receive U.S. support in their efforts to carry the burden of the fighting and the war.

The Nixon Doctrine and “Vietnamization”--the less than humble labels used by the Commander of the Free World for his policies--terminated immediately the endless chases after large-unit Vietcong forces and NVA forces invigorated by the constant flow of new recruits from North Vietnam’s huge supply of youth (a demographic reality central to understanding the durability of the enemy), but instead demanded a major overhaul of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF).⁵⁷⁹

South Vietnam’s armed forces would, according to Nixon’s thinking, reenter the war far more capable, professional, and equipped. These regenerated warriors would be carrying better weapons (i.e. the M-16s widespread distribution), operating in higher coordination with political and military objectives and forces (better joint operations), fighting in much larger numbers (a massive increase in military personnel), and concentrating on counter-insurgency using local intelligence rather than the micro-management of the war by higher echelons of power who used such an approach since the administration of President John F. Kennedy.

Moreover, the strategic retaliation remained among Nixon’s most important changes in military thinking, a means to find an end to the Vietnam War.⁵⁸⁰ Rejecting hawkish ideas advocating the initiation of a massive invasion or military strike on North Vietnam, which would only destroy American public opinion for the war and do nothing to further the fighting capacity

of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN), he instead linked massive American retaliatory power to the certainty that North Vietnam would act aggressively.

This retaliatory power could gain momentum from the political forces of American domestic opinion reacting angrily to Communist aggression as the same public demanded the safe return of its favorite sons, who like their Asian brothers in the South needed time to create the safety born of confident military strength and not its diminution.⁵⁸¹ Strategic retaliation would not just target renewable resources like troop concentrations but rather the vital organs of the little dragon, his military-industrial complex and his logistic systems running through Cambodia and Laos along the Ho Chi Minh trail.

But Nixon dealt with another enemy, the same enemy that challenged his presidential predecessor, an enemy far more deadly than the North Vietnamese or their allies: time. Watching the gentle clicks of the passing of time as if a concerned physician checking a patient's pacemaker, Nixon feared that even a subtle lapse in rhythm could be fatal to the political health of his policies. He remarked:

What we needed most was time. No President has a limitless amount of time to invest in any policy. Because my predecessors had exhausted the patience of the American people with the Vietnam War, I was acutely aware that I was living on borrowed time. If I was to have enough time for my policies to succeed, my first priority had to be to gather as much political support as possible for the war from the American people.⁵⁸²



President Nixon Shakes Hands with Armed Forces in Vietnam

The Good . . . the Bad. . . and the Broken

History proves that wars are not won through effective strategies alone. For the young Americans who entered a new decade in the 1970s trekked through the same rice paddies and elephant grass as their predecessors, fighting to a finish under a blazing sun a war that had threatened Southeast Asia for over four decades by then. The ARVN, who had been vilified in the American press for cowardice, corruption, and cronyism, fought bravely during the same period, and nervously awaited the implications of Washington's new strategies while remaining determined to fight Communist aggression.

Few leaders in Saigon envisioned that in less than a half a decade into the 1970s the nation of South Vietnam would be left alone to face the wrath of international Communism spearheaded by the North, which had grown far more advanced in its military power and tactics, and had used adroitly the powers of political warfare to create the confusion, images, and falsities in America that eroded public support for the war.⁵⁸³

The Good . . .

Long forgotten in public memory of “the bad war” was the fact that many devoted American soldiers and service personnel (doctors, technicians, educators, and others) in South Vietnam continued to face bravely the hardships of a conflict that had grown even more deadly during this period. As some of the hardest fighting followed the aftermath of Tet, during the early years of the Nixon administration “good men and women” wore their uniforms and principles honorably in Vietnam and remained committed to seeing the struggle through to the end. A single factor dominated the thoughts and literature of this group: despite the hardships, personal issues that often alienated other soldiers from the flag, and nerve-racking uncertainties lurking in the “fog of war,” *a Communist victory would bring death, suffering, and misery that would make every other issue pale in comparison.* And no true American could allow that outcome.⁵⁸⁴

These faithful Americans gained succor from their families and the nation, which voiced their support of the war amid the protests and confusion of the times. Beyond the statistical studies used to validate and invalidate the justness of the war according to the “facts” of popular opinion, a segment of American society remained faithful to cause and country and gave hearty support to the war and those loved ones serving in Vietnam. For example, in contrast to the

hard-headed youth who protested the war, the hard-hatted workers of America--laborers and many of their unions--supported fervently the war in Vietnam. Their determined stand during that turmoil stands as a memorial of patriotism and principled dedication to American ideals.⁵⁸⁵

Rather than suffering with self-imposed psychological afflictions of war guilt, many patriotic Americans like these feared for their beloved in Asian lands while struggling to hide this emotion under currents of altruism emerging from inner resources too deep to locate by natural observation. Innate motherly love coursed into gentle fingers that tied boxed items bound for GIs barely old enough to justify the awkward fit of uniforms, which covered all but these baby faces that once smiled in green fields where footballs and baseball bats determined the outcomes rather than artillery rounds and M-16s.

Young children too innocent to understand foreign lands where “Daddy fought to protect freedom” raised little chins to lick stamps for stuffed letters carrying images in crayon that evoked sentiments far beyond the simple art destined to arrive in the Republic of Vietnam. The same animating spirit humbled knees for offering up prayers to the Almighty on behalf of those fighting to make the world a different place.

In 1968, one American PFC (Private First Class) reacting to a typical example of encouragement from the home front wrote back:

Did I tell you? Just a few short months ago I read in the paper that many citizens all over our great nation drove around during the daytime, one weekend, with their automobile lights on! To show their support for the boys in Vietnam. Let me tell you how truly moved I was by this sacrifice on their part. Many of us wept openly and unashamedly when the news arrived. The sight of our dear flag, glimmering in the Vietnamese twilight, above the Vietnamese soil, that night, stirred us all more deeply than we were usually stirred, Ah yes. ‘By the rockets’ red glare, the bombs bursting in air’ . . . ah yes.⁵⁸⁶

Sure, the critics scorned this aspect of the Vietnam War and home front history. And too many scholars delight in tearing apart the idealism and patriotism of the age. Moments of doubts

and despair in soldier diaries, the economic and career aspirations linked to service, and even the small-unit combat loyalties that grew so strong as to subjugate patriotism under survivalism were all major aspects of understanding the war in Vietnam.⁵⁸⁷

But patriotism even in its diluted form, idealism mixed with natural self interest, has fanned the fires of progress in America's past as service in a just cause trumped surrender and despair. During the American Revolutionary War, General George Washington, after calling attention to his army's problems with poor discipline, looting, and low morale, warned that pure idealism was as small "as a drop in the ocean."⁵⁸⁸ Yet America's foremost hero urged Congress to overcome these problems by allowing his troops to be paid properly, trained effectively, and professionalized in order to meet the challenges of a determined Redcoat enemy. The progress created by that courageous and optimistic leadership stood above battlefield glories alone and towered into the heights of human achievement where lofty ideals of freedom covered an entire content.

The integrity of America's mission, its quest for victory, can be found (as it always has been) in braving the problems while never losing sight of the face of the enemy and the consequences of defeat. Those who refuse to see "us" and "them" are not being more humane but more like "them," the forces who champion darkness under the banner of liberty. Our Founding Fathers knew that, and when facing the foremost military power in the world these early Americans declared to all who would listen:

With hearts fortified with these animating reflections, we most solemnly, before God and the world, declare, that, exerting the utmost energy of those powers, which our beneficent Creator has graciously bestowed upon us, the arms we have been compelled by our enemies to assume, we will, in defiance of every hazard, with unabating firmness and perseverance, employ for the preservation of our liberties; being with our [one] mind resolved to die free men rather than live slaves.⁵⁸⁹

Furthermore, the South Vietnamese soldiers were also a part of the “good,” the progressive forces in Vietnam that many Americans misunderstood—a people “resolved to die free men rather than live slaves.”⁵⁹⁰ The American media often questioned their fighting abilities, loyalties, and leadership, yet the RVNAF desired to continue the fight and keep South Vietnam from experiencing the tragedies of life in the North—a cause joined by other allies in Southeast Asia. Amid the apathetic villagers, the corrupt officials, and the bribes that oiled the political machines of the South, a potent ideology—a vibrant nationalism—stirred the fighting forces and aroused enough “moxy” to justify the high levels of death and participation in the “long war.”⁵⁹¹



Army of the Republic of Vietnam Service Banner

ARVN General Quang Thi Lam described that fighting spirit well—and the qualitative difference between South Vietnamese nationalism and North Vietnamese political indoctrination:

In this regard, I think it is appropriate to elaborate on the enemy’s motivation. The VC’s and the NVA soldier’s behavior, in fact, was strictly conditioned by a sophisticated system of political indoctrination. The following story, however, shows that this system was not without shortcomings: When I commanded the 9th Division in the Mekong Delta, one day, I overheard an intersecting radio debate on the operation frequency during a Vinh Long Sector-directed operation: ‘You, mercenary,’ shouted the VC, ‘you should be ashamed to be the lackey of U.S.

imperialists.’ ‘You bastard, listen to me,’ reported the RF soldier. ‘I can say, ‘Down with Nguyen Van Thieu.’ Can you say the same thing about Ho Chi Minh?’⁵⁹²

Yet, the best compliments of South Vietnam’s soldiers may have come from those who knew them from across the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) or while staring down a barrel of an M-16. The repetitive cries of “puppet” which barked and screeched from North Vietnamese propaganda radios and emanated from tight-fisted propaganda pens covered well secret dispatches from the same source which warned of the tenacity and determination of the ARVN leadership. Despite some successes in penetrating the high echelons of South Vietnam’s military leadership by 1972, North Vietnamese leaders noted in a secret dispatch discovered later in a Russian archive:

The political views of puppet army officers’ captain and above are very reactionary. Previously they were officers or soldiers in the French Army. Now they are remaining in the army and speak in favor of the previous Saigon government, inciting counter-revolution and anti-nationalism. They hate the revolution. Therefore, applying propaganda amongst soldiers and especially amongst the officer corps is difficult and varied, demanding study from all sides and a creative approach in the choice of methods and means.⁵⁹³

These commitments in the South, not easily broken, followed many of the same Vietnamese leaders to the United States after the fall of Saigon in 1975, and compelled them to advocate for the rights and freedoms of their families, friends, and countrymen in Vietnam—an advocacy that has endured through decades to the present. The longevity (and durability) of this cause speaks for itself.⁵⁹⁴

College students today will find little mention of this legacy in their history courses, but rather praises and justifications of North Vietnam’s nationalism and fighting spirit. If present trends continue, textbooks in the hands of America’s next generation of leaders who study the Vietnam War will continue to treat unfairly the free South Vietnamese: defections by the ARVN

will be emphasized but the mass NVA/VC defections will be minimized or unmentioned; NVA success at mobilization will be highlighted, and ARVN mobilization, which occurred in huge numbers after Tet 1968 and during Vietnamization, will be forgotten; and North Vietnam's nationalism based on empty propaganda, repression of information pertaining to the war, and even organized efforts to hide war casualties and disabled veterans (another undiscussed fact) will remain the example of nationalism in the history of the Vietnam War.⁵⁹⁵ But few will call this "nationalism" what it was in reality: a common form of militarism and fanaticism that has occurred frequently in world history.

However, branding every opponent of the Vietnam War "a traitor"—those Americans who were not as good as these others—is excessive and immoderate, as well as overly simplistic. For the motives involved in opposition to the war varied significantly—and Hanoi was keenly aware that idealists, a large number of "good" Americans who contributed much to American society could be induced to oppose the war, or agitated in their opposition to it, through manipulation of these ideals. In 1982, former Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recalled in *Years of Upheaval*:

Like a surgeon wielding a scalpel, Hanoi dissected the American psyche and probed our weaknesses, our national sense of guilt, our quest for final answers, our idealism, and, yes, even the values of its sympathizers, whom it duped no less cold-bloodedly than its adversaries. Our misfortune had been to get between these leaders and their obsessions.⁵⁹⁶

Many of these good Americans (veterans, humanitarians, ministers, physicians, educators, etc.,) experiencing a major insurgent war for the first time and without historical precedent, could not comprehend fully a political war in which the enemy deployed in populated areas (villages) and used children and other civilians as cover in order to create civilian casualties to showcase falsehoods in the world's media, feeding hungry visual appetites the disinformation intended.⁵⁹⁷

This tactic of the enemy disturbed not only the American public but also its soldiers in Southeast Asia. In 1971 an American aviator noted one day as he viewed the civilian casualties of war:

I held the clipboard on my lap, a ballpoint pen between my fingers. I have seen civilians killed before, of course. The VC and NVA use them as cover. It's just the way they work. These things happen, I tell myself. I go through a little speech to myself, the ordinary speech, a few lines I carry with me just in case. It's a little speech about the nature of the war, but today it doesn't do much good. I listen to the works as if they are coming from someone else, from some understanding neighbor.⁵⁹⁸

The troubled mind of the American public reeled furthermore on the intoxicating memories of a heroic past, which impeded the timely acquisition of public information requisite for defeating an insurgency. Notions of victory in conventional wars of an earlier era served as illusory ideological parameters for determining victory or defeat in Vietnam. For there was no ground to be taken or lost there, no singular reliance on opposing army forces that fought battles that would determine the day's successes or failures, and no media shots sanitized to fit glorified images of war as in World War II, when "Uncle Joe" Stalin's Russia, Sir Winston Churchill's England, and President Franklin Roosevelt's America all stood side by side in a sterling example of allied unity.⁵⁹⁹ Without smoldering images of a mangled Pearl Harbor to incite action, many Americans rested upon these past assumptions to no avail.

Moreover, pacifists, moralists, and idealists of all stripes often missed the significance of the war in their quest for ideological purity, "protection of innocent life," and "reform" of America. For example, Martin Luther King, Jr., who flinched not at the water cannons and brutal police batons that battered his marching ranks but not their legitimate quest for equality and dignity, succumbed to radical and Communist propaganda about the war. The subconscious friction between his indomitable spirit and his bruised soul, wounded in street battles for racial

justice, would not spark the divinity that lightens spiritual meaning for disparate troubles at home and abroad. His speeches creating an “unequal yoke” with Vietnam, uniting artificially the violent racism at home and the aggression in Indochina, made sense to many in a huddled generation sharing comfort during the national trauma of the Vietnam War--a war conducted largely by the same complexion of snarling white faces that often inflicted pain on his body and disturbed his “dream.”

Dr. King’s idealism and personal experiences--born of those bitter battles with a racist enemy--created a parochialism that could not see North Vietnam’s aggression, “the content of their character.” Although in 1968 an assassin’s bullet ended prematurely the life of this gentle reformer and remarkable civil rights leader, his words justifying the North Vietnamese cause and comparing the United States war effort to that of Nazi Germany’s continued to foster the “internal contradictions” that Hanoi reveled in. In 1967 King remarked about American soldiers in Vietnam:

For it occurs to me that what we are submitting them to in Vietnam is not simply the brutalizing process that goes on in any war where armies face each other and seek to destroy. We are adding cynicism to the process of death, for they must know after a short period there that none of the things we claim to be fighting for are really involved. Before long they must know that their government has sent them into a struggle among Vietnamese, and the more sophisticated surely realize that we are on the side of the wealthy and the secure, while we create a hell for the poor.⁶⁰⁰



**Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Speaking at an
Anti-Vietnam War Rally, 1967**

The Bad . . .

During the Vietnamization period, the Vietnamese Communists and American intellectuals comprising the New Left formed a symbiotic relationship more problematic to the American body politic than if the relationship were formally organized and left to machinations of only a foreign enemy rather than common passions driving both in the same direction. The rabid hatred of the radical Left fed upon its American host with a cancerous hunger that matched the intensity of the parasitical forces of North Vietnamese political warfare leaching the same victim in a bleeding that the would ultimately be fatal to the war effort.

The two partners played a game far different from charades, which relies on enthusiastic guesswork coaxed by the other as both stumble through time to reach a meeting of minds. The Vietnamese Communist Party and the New Left were more like two lovers on a first date surprised at their mutual discovery of a romantic “chemistry” created through deep affinities and similar dislikes. The common goal of harming and destroying the United States often brought the two together on identical actions in time and place creating the bad outcomes that troubled the White House. “The voice of one crying in the wilderness” of the Left exhorted in 1972:

Those of us, who long ago saw no hope in the American government for peace, wish the liberation [Communist] forces victory! We believe that the Movement in the U.S. should join the offensive with all the levels of commitment and tactics open to us. . . . Next Wednesday, April 12th at 2:30 at the EMU there will be rally to support the liberation forces of Indochina and at 2:30 in 150 Science let's make the U of O faculty finally vote to off ROTC NOW! JOIN THE OFFENSIVE!⁶⁰¹

While many of these radicals protested openly, the molten aggression of North Vietnam stirred underground in caverns of secrecy and collusion creating the pressures that were later visible in the canalized militarism that streamed destructively into the South and caused its ruin. During one such underground meeting between North Vietnam and the People's Republic of China, the motives and military planning expressed provide glowing details of the determination and dishonesty in which Hanoi pursued its singular objective of conquering the Republic of Vietnam and annexing its lands. On 19 April 1968, following the bombing pause initiated by President Johnson, Premier Pham Van Dong assured Zhou En-lai of the People's Republic of China that Hanoi would escalate fighting during negotiations:

I would like to tell you our grand strategy applied in the anti-American war. We have talked with you about it since late 1966. This strategy is demonstrated in the following slogans: to defend the North, to liberate the South. . . . We divided it into two aspects, or two steps, two stages, with a view of step by step defeating the U.S. We are still following this strategy. . . .

Now, I return to your question of whether we are de-escalating. If it is understood that de-escalating means less fighting, the answer should be an absolute no. If it is understood that de-escalation means some compromise, the answer is no; we didn't think and act that way. To the contrary, we are all the more attacking, using diplomatic tactics, forcing them into a corner, mobilizing world opinion against the enemy. It is now the time for us to escalate and win over the enemy, not to de-escalate.⁶⁰²



Vietnam War Protests, 1967

Thus the North Vietnamese that Nixon faced during his presidency held no respect for compromise, which they called “the language of gangsters.”⁶⁰³ Hanoi’s war planners emphasized “unbroken” and “offensive” military action, for “revolutionary violence” would tolerate nothing less.⁶⁰⁴ Consequently, a striking word appears often in their military planning, a word that reveals their singular consideration: “balance of forces.”⁶⁰⁵ Throughout the Vietnamization period Hanoi carefully weighed the balance of forces (political, economic aid,

and military power), which shifted to its favor. Never awaiting these outcomes, the Vietnamese sons of V.I. Lenin used propaganda, political warfare, and “power from the barrel of a gun” to achieve that objective.⁶⁰⁶

But the elevation of the dead Ho Chi Minh to the pantheon of Communist saints used to justify the war against “American imperialism” was not enough to mobilize North Vietnam’s vibrant youth.⁶⁰⁷ Nor could Hanoi use effectively its propaganda petitions to summon from dusty family altars (dedicated to ancestors) the ancient energies of martial valor that the Vietnamese commonly revered from their cherished past.

Rather, propaganda themes in the North, propelled by the gutsy leadership of the Party’s best, relied on messages that terrified their people with warnings that the United States intended to “exterminate” the Vietnamese people and to “enslave” them. Hanoi offered hope to these disgruntled Northern masses as they resisted the alleged American “genocide, biocide, and ecocide,” for hundreds of thousands of Americans and “satellite troops” had been “annihilated” and “wiped out” in victories that Hanoi’s utopian thinkers created for a desperate public striving to win the “war of national salvation.”⁶⁰⁸

Equally effective was the Democratic Republic of Vietnam’s propaganda for export. American citizens ate a steady diet of bad value meals, falsehoods cooked in large quantities by Hanoi’s ideology kitchens and then served quickly by the mass media and by universities in the United States. Among the many propaganda themes easily digested by a bloated and unhealthy public was the ludicrous notion that North Vietnam was “a poor peasant nation” (a little guy), “a nation, which has neither a vast territory nor a very large population,”⁶⁰⁹ being devoured and cruelly massacred by a monstrous nation, the United States.

North Vietnam's huge population potentially fielded 130,000 new military recruits a year who turned seventeen years of age.⁶¹⁰ The large size of Vietnam's territory, coupled with the extended reach of Hanoi into its neighbors' lands, provided ample space for its protracted war strategy. Nevertheless, many American political and opinion leaders reacted so strongly to these allegations of American brutality against the little guy that U.S. Congressmen held hearings and investigations that accused our military and political leaders of these very war crimes while allowing the North Vietnamese to expect far less accountability for their many atrocities committed during the war.⁶¹¹ The implication that the United States, and not the enemy, killed indiscriminately played into the hands of Hanoi who sought to paralyze America's war effort by creating a repugnance to it.

From 1968 to 1975, "the little guy" skillfully managed the tensions within the Communist bloc and using its extremely large amount of aid embarked upon a "massive military expansion" (as Hanoi called it) which escalated the war in Indochina and transformed the NVA into one of the largest armies in the world.⁶¹² Huge numbers of soldiers added to newly formed divisions created a numerical superiority over the RVNAF, whose increased numbers under Vietnamization (but lessened by American troop withdrawals) could not match Hanoi's expansion which reached the one million mark by 1973.⁶¹³ American military leaders cautiously watched the same belligerent increase its weaponry, adapt its tactics, and redeploy in preparation for major assaults that threatened the very survival of the Republic of Vietnam.

From 1968 to 1973, the successors of Ho Chi Minh, ever ready to exploit a political or military vacuum, poured their conventional forces into Laos and Cambodia (as well as South Vietnam) and escalated the fighting in both these foreign nations. The American media, which reported but never prioritized these aggressions, remained morally silent to these violations of

international law, national sovereignty, and peace--as 40,000 NVA/VC roamed Cambodia and conquered major provinces there.⁶¹⁴ Nixon responded with a massive aerial bombing campaign (Operation Menu) in 1969 and later ground assaults in the Cambodian Incursion (1970) and in the ARVN-led Operation Lam Son 719 (1971)--two attempts to dislodge the formidable presence of the enemy and destroy its logistics and supplies.

Despite the unquestionable success of the first two operations, less success with the third, the NVA remained well positioned and able to redeploy to the interior of Cambodia, where decades of revolutionary violence had been carefully cultivated by Hanoi's hand-picked insurgents trained in North Vietnam.⁶¹⁵ The painful lesson learned was not that the ARVN proved incapable, but rather that these decades of unchecked aggression could not be arrested in stop-gap measures limited in intensity, time, and place—a fact that a fidgety Nixon, hamstrung and shamed by the mistakes of his predecessor, found embarrassing when questioned by our allies, who only wanted an end to Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.⁶¹⁶

Even after all this fighting in the early 1970s, the U.S. had a formidable task ahead. In 1970, the fall of the duplicitous Norodom Sihanouk of Cambodia left American policymakers with the advantage of a less duplicitous leader in Lon Nol but certainly not a friend or a decisive strategic shift in the balance of forces.⁶¹⁷ The port of Sihanoukville in Cambodia had been closed under Nol but the NVA effectively used the Laotian Panhandle and Ho Chi Minh trail while continuing to support Ho Chi Minh's offspring, the Khmer Rouge, which recruited effectively in the countryside while massacring those who resisted or who were deemed unworthy.⁶¹⁸ The waves of Cambodians fleeing to Phnom Penh, another defacto vote against Communist rule, was not enough to animate further American support beyond the limits of the "Incursion," for the American public and leadership had grown war weary by then and confused

about the nature of aggression there—just as many remained confused over who started the aggression at Kent State, the students or the state.

Escalation had brought opportunities to the aggressor: the ability to tax further American and RVNAF power while building the offensive capabilities of the North. For instance, the Ho Chi Minh trail became not merely an infiltration route or logistical corridor but rather an invasion route—transformed by the dogged determination of the enemy. From 1968 to 1975, the trail had expanded in complexity, operation, and reach despite the attempts by the allies to disrupt it. One simple fact sums up the matter well: by the last few years of the war the time needed to move soldiers and supplies from North to South was reduced from 2-3 months to one week.⁶¹⁹

Hanoi wasted little time employing these advantages and gains in military power and geographical position. On March 30, 1972, the North Vietnamese Army attempted to overrun South Vietnam in a major cross border assault, which thrust the South into a “survival war”—in the words of South Vietnam’s President Nguyen Van Thieu. Hoping to influence the U.S. presidential elections (for a “peace” candidate), and to test ARVN strength in the wake of American troop withdrawals (reduced to 6,000 remaining in the South), this “Easter Offensive” smashed against the rock-like determination of the South and American air power, which crushed the troop concentrations of the NVA.

The “awesome” attack by the North (as an ARVN general called it) allowed President Nixon to unleash a strategic retaliation that included not just a devastating B-52 campaign called Linebacker I, but also other important military counter measures which he called “our most telling operation”: mining Haiphong Harbor (and other harbors in the North) and a blockade of North Vietnam’s coast.⁶²⁰ Nixon, building upon his triangulation with China and the Soviet

Union, negotiated their silence during this retaliation when “the bastards [had] never been bombed . . . like this time.”⁶²¹

The allied victory elevated not only Nixon to another presidential term later that year but also the spirits of the South Vietnamese, who had proved their metal in a battle of wills with the North. Vietnamization succeeded when many in the United States doubted that it would, and the viability (as well as survivability) of the Republic of Vietnam never looked better.

General Lam highlighted a point conceded from a captured enemy source: “At that time, one captured communist document stated that ‘Saigon’s Infantry +American Firepower=National Liberation Army (NLA).’ An Loc, and as we shall see later, ARVN’s successful defense of Kontum and recapture of Quang Tri, unequivocally demonstrated that ‘Saigon’s Infantry +American Firepower> NLA+NVA.’”⁶²²

Yet the bad guys in the “bad war” left a bloody trail in their defeat, killing civilians in a fashion painfully reminiscent of a Marxist past. Bloody executions in Binh Dinh Province, coupled with artillery shelling of fleeing refugees during the offensive, reminded the Government of Vietnam of an old problem. During the war the North Vietnamese and Vietcong had killed civilians often while lusting for political and military objectives at hand: for “several thousand government officials, mostly civil servants in the rural areas,” a South Vietnamese government leader noted in the past, “are assassinated and kidnapped every year. Schools, hospitals, pagodas, and churches are constantly destroyed.”⁶²³

President Nixon, well aware of that Communist legacy, could not but recoil at the enemy’s atrocities following the Easter Offensive of 1972: “In one hamlet, fort-seven local officials were buried alive. In Quang Ngai Province, Communist troops strung land mines around forty victims and then, as their wives and children watched, detonated the mines, blowing

the helpless captives to bits.”⁶²⁴ Certainly not an isolated instance: On 14 June 1970 the NVA massacred the village of Phu Than, less than 20 miles south of Danang. One hundred civilians perished after these “liberation forces” dropped grenades and satchel charges into the bunker where these villagers sought refuge.⁶²⁵

During the same period, Communist Vietnamese--reduced in effectiveness in the South--indiscriminately fired rockets into cities and other civilian areas devoid of military targets. Like so many other reckless acts of terror against Southern civilians, these incidents remained relatively unreported (and certainly minimized) by the American media. Sir Robert Thompson, a famous British counter-insurgent, commented on the lack of ethics by these critics:

The North Vietnamese and Vietcong had also been able to bring up mortars and 122 mm rockets into the flooded rice fields on the outskirts of Saigon from which they could fire indiscriminately into the entire of the city both day and night. There was no attempt to pick out military targets which were few in the centre of the city in any case and shells had been lobbed at random into the busiest streets. The killing of innocent civilians, indiscriminate, did not evoke one little peep of condemnation from the dissemblers who hasten to condemn such acts even when unintentionally committed by the United States.⁶²⁶

Instead of prioritizing these atrocities, the bad media and bad universities of America shouted over these stories with clamorous attacks on the character and record of the Republic of Vietnam and American war effort—a fact these anti-war voices vehemently deny.⁶²⁷ There was no genuine debate among the media and educators, no principled journalism dominating public discourse, but outright preference for and support of the enemy and vilification of the United States—all under the pretext of freedom of speech. These pundits depicted nearly every defensive action of the American military as an “escalation,” a “creeping involvement” and a “violation of Cambodian or Laotian neutrality.”⁶²⁸

For example, Stanley Karnow, among the most eminent journalist of the Vietnam War era, praised the Khmer Rouge and predicted that their victory would be an improvement for

Cambodia. And Walter Cronkite of CBS remarked about his own preference for the Vietnamese Communists while further perpetuating myths about Communist killings: “Atrocities are committed by both sides, and no newsman in Vietnam sees enemy forces as the forces of light. Generally, however, the Vietcong terrorist tactics are more selective, if only because they depend on villagers for food and shelter. Generally, but not always.”⁶²⁹ Perhaps Mr. Cronkite was not aware of the aforesaid facts and the fact that on December 5, 1967, the VC, “using sixty flame throwers, incinerated 252 Montagnard tribesmen—mostly women and children.”⁶³⁰

The Broken . . .

Nevertheless, the enemy had been badly defeated and broken by the end of 1972, smashed in spirit and in strength in the aftermath of Linebacker I and II. His “long war” strategy had a long tale, one which exploded as fast as the B-52 shells that devastated his military-industrial complex by the end of that year.⁶³¹ North Vietnam had always feared that the United States would destroy its nation, or that high casualties in the North would end the war. The enemy, simply put, could not expand and retract (recover), expand and retract again, repeating the process indefinitely under the duress of heavy losses while rebuilding from the rubble of a demoralized people—a scenario Maoist asymmetrical warfare doctrine could not accommodate.

This fact was evident even prior to 1972. During a meeting in 1970 between Mao Zedong and Le Duan (among the most militant North Vietnamese leaders), he cautioned the aged Chinese warlord: “Our current ways of fighting cause low casualties. Otherwise it is impossible for us to persist for a long time.”⁶³²

But the pains of defeat were more acutely felt at the grassroots level. Those who had been told to “steel themselves” against American imperialism found--like the Tin Man from *The*

Wizard of Oz—a heart in the realities of a life that not even a magical land of totalitarian controls could prevent. A North Vietnamese citizen commented in 1968:

Very few of my friends wanted to go into the army. That was especially true after Tet Mau Thanh [1968 Tet Offensive]. At the beginning of the offensive we heard all about victory after victory. But after a couple of weeks we didn't hear any more news. The Saigon regime was still there and the U.S. planes were still bombing. It was obvious the radio wasn't telling the truth. That was the time when suspicions about the government began to arise.⁶³³

Hanoi's broken back took years to heal.⁶³⁴ And the unenforced Paris Peace Accords provided that healing time. To say that the DRV was disingenuous in the talks would be an understatement and an anti-climax to the narrative here told. For the North pulled the oldest trick in the book—literally. The ancient biblical book of Genesis records that the first human death in history was a victim of diplomacy. An aggressive Cain, rebuffed in his arrogant ways, turned his rage toward his own brother and used feigned conversation to carry out a murderous plan. “And Cain *talked* with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him (Genesis 4:8; emphasis is mine).

After his humiliation, the Vietnamese version of Cain likewise had an agenda that relied on talk and violence against his brother (in the South). Not even a trace of evidence exists that Hanoi wanted to sign the Peace Accords for any other reason than to implement their old aggressions covered with the cosmetics of diplomacy: to remove the presence of U.S. military from Indochina; to buy time to militarize and prepare for renewed attempts to seize the South; to spread further Communist revolutions throughout Indochina; and later to prevent the return of the United States to Southeast Asia so that the South would be isolated and easily defeated.⁶³⁵

In fact, Hanoi planned for a revolutionary uprising as soon as the Accords were to be signed. A captured document dated October 4, 1972 and called “Plan of General Uprising When a Political Solution is Reached” noted:

When a political solution is reached we have to initiate a general uprising which is carried out continuously on the largest scale and which will go on before, during and after the cease-fire becomes effective, the purpose is to gain biggest victories and to liberate the bulk of the rural area. The task of winning and keeping the people, seizing and holding land, disputing and occupying the important territories, is a strategic matter, a pressing requirement of the present time and for the long future, and also a matter of survival for the revolution containing a historical meaning of utmost importance. For these reasons, we have to dispute decisively with the enemy for every citizen, every inch of land, to plant our flags, encroach deeply on enemy territory and enlarge our area.⁶³⁶

The DRV's operational directives during this time reasserted the familiar theme of relying on revolutionary violence and urging unbroken offensive action against the South, a push in all major areas: diplomatic, legal, military, and economic (subversion). Even the "land grabbing" that South Vietnam was chided for by its critics was never a dispute over who rightly controlled a given territory, but a desperate attempt to defend against the formation of military staging areas of the NVA that were indeed used later for outright invasion of the South—just as it feared..⁶³⁷ Leaving no room for doubt among Party members, after the Accords were signed Hanoi called the agreement "a weapon" to be used against the enemy"⁶³⁸

The Paris Accords, rightly despised by the South for major deficiencies, gave many advantages to the North as the United States stopped its heavy bombing and withdrew from Indochina. The North could use its "new weapon" to reinforce its troop strength and position in the South, develop further its logistics and forces in Laos and Cambodia, introduce more sophisticated weapons, and continue the subversion of the South under the guise of exercising "freedoms" and "arbitration." Hanoi accomplished the aforesaid, all breaches of the Agreement, with skill and concealment typical of its "fighting while negotiating" strategy.⁶³⁹

In contrast, during these growing years of the ARVN, South Vietnam had only one assurance: the United States would respond with decisive force if the North violated the treaty. President Nixon acknowledged this reality and assured President Thieu that this would indeed be

the case. The Commander-in-Chief affirmed to a disquieted Thieu late in 1972: “But far more important than what we say in the agreement on this issue is what we do in the event the enemy renews its aggression. You have my absolute assurance that if Hanoi fails to abide by the terms of this agreement it is my intention to take swift and severe retaliatory action.”⁶⁴⁰ Nixon was right: without the strategic retaliation the peace document was worthless, having no deterrent power to check the North’s aggression.⁶⁴¹

The immediate aftermath of the Paris Peace Accords signed in January 1973 witnessed a period of jubilation in the United States. Hanoi’s signature on a document that contained concessions from those “steeled” in defiance, the return of America’s Prisoners of War, and the confidence of the Republic of Vietnam seemed to brighten American hopes that had longed for such an outcome. President Nixon responded more soberly regarding the signing of the Paris Agreement: “It was not our finest hour but it was the *final* hour.”⁶⁴²

Despite the fact that the Communist Vietnamese had been defeated, the “balance of forces” began to shift rapidly in Hanoi’s favor. A simple assessment of the power struggle in the fall of 1973 should consider the following: First, the Communist bloc was willing to continue indefinitely to support its ally, North Vietnam; the United States had decided the very opposite regarding its ally. Second, the North Vietnamese planned to invade and conquer the South by taking an offensive strategy; the South refused to invade North but rather took a defensive strategy (a military policy far harder to achieve). Third, the North held no hesitation about aiding its surrogates and fighting their battles in Laos and Cambodia; the United States refused (under penalty of Congressional law) to reintroduce ground troops or military forces in Indochina. Fourth, the Northern leadership remained committed to a “long war” and the

development of its military forces; Washington and the American public demanded a short war and expected the South to fight on its own and win without U.S. support.

The United States Congress, a broken leadership, assured that this balance of power would fall upon the necks of the South Vietnamese—many who had feared that very outcome. Congress made three decisions that were fatal to the life of the Republic of Vietnam. The very first decision involved repealing in May 1970 the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution, an act that invalidated the war effort and harmed the fighting spirit of America. It was completely within the right of Congress to question what happened in the Gulf of Tonkin in 1965. It was morally reprehensible to allow these doubts over one incident to somehow cover over decades of North Vietnamese aggression and imply that the United States fought in Vietnam for no just reason.

Second, on July 1, 1973 the Congress passed legislation barring the United States from conducting military operations “in or over or from off the shores of North Vietnam, South Vietnam, Laos or Cambodia.”⁶⁴³ This legislation gave North Vietnam “a green light” to attack the South with impunity from the United States. The Paris Accords thus became unenforceable and worthless—and with it the security of the South.

Third, when Congress cut on August 5, 1974 United States military aid to the South, reducing funds to levels that would not allow the Government of Vietnam to maintain its military much less match the increases of the North—which had modernized and aggrandized in the aftermath of the Paris Agreement, the very will of the ARVN was shaken and the security of South Vietnam was all but finished. The 700 million dollar aid earmarked for South Vietnam in 1975 “barely met half of the minimum basic requirements” of the RVNAF.⁶⁴⁴ The demoralized General Nguyen Duy Hinh of the ARVN speaking furthermore on behalf of his beleaguered defenses recalled: “Ten air squadrons of about 200 air-craft, twenty-one river patrol groups, and

over half the RVNAF truck fleet had been grounded because there were no operational funds.”⁶⁴⁵ The General then stated the obvious, “the balance of forces had clearly tipped to the enemy’s favor.”

Hanoi was well aware that the South was fighting a “poor man’s war” of greatly reduced effectiveness⁶⁴⁶ With the absence of a strong United States response to violations of the Paris Accords, and the ability to move troops without American air interdiction, the incentive for aggression was irresistible to a leadership that waited several decades for that very moment in time. After the fall of Phuoc Long Province on January 6, 1975, North Vietnam’s Politburo ordered a major offensive to crush South Vietnam.

But before the South was broken, North Vietnam’s broke its pledge at Paris renouncing the use of force to annex the South. On May 31, 1972 during the negotiations Le Duc Tho stated: “For our part, we have said many times, –since I returned to Paris, this is the fifth time– we have declared clearly that the DRV government and the PRG of the Republic of South Vietnam have never wished to force a Communist government on South Vietnam.”⁶⁴⁷

Nixon, a broken man who had resigned a year earlier, was powerless to help. Scandalized by Watergate, and burned by the passions of patriotism gone awry in the combustible matter of selfish interests of his own heart, he could not stop the sinister leaks in his own administration or the leaks in security oozing through the broken defenses of the South. On 15 April, Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, joining the ranks of broken hawks like Nixon, hypocritically denied the absolute obligation of the United States to defend the free Vietnamese people. He stated: “The United States has no legal obligation to the Government and the people of South Viet-Nam of which Congress is not aware. But we do have a deep moral obligation–

rooted in history of our involvement and sustained by the continuing efforts of our friends. We cannot easily set it aside.”⁶⁴⁸

Exacerbating an already dire situation, on March 14, 1975 President Thieu--caught in the dilemma of North Vietnam's onslaught--broke the unity of his weakened defenses by calling for a rapid redeployment of ARVN forces to defend the Mekong region. The hasty withdrawal shattered the cohesiveness of the ARVN and created a panic among the Vietnamese people already fleeing to the elusive safety of an uncertain war zone. Fighting in the last throws of a survival war, his brave troops pleaded for reinforcements and supplies. An ARVN soldier wrote his father during that time.

Very dear Father. . . the situation deteriorates in my sector. Not because the population is receptive to the propaganda of the 'other side', but because we lacked the means with which to fight. The farmer, members of the Self-Defense forces, do not have enough ammunition for their rifles and are forced to buy their grenades from the soldiers of the Regular Army, less engaged than them. The Regular Army does not avoid combat, but every time it engages the enemy, it incurs heavy losses because it is under equipped in materiel and weapons.⁶⁴⁹



President Nguyen Van Thieu, 1968

Dejected but determined, our allies did not simply quit and lay down their weapons as the critics charged. Many did in the face of near hopeless resistance but many did not. In the month of April, ARVN forces fought desperately and tenaciously against the North Vietnamese. Others like Cambodian leaders General Sirik Matak and Prime Minister Long Boret refused to abandon their people and flee to free soil. In that tragic hour, Sirik Matak wrote a heart-breaking letter to the United States Ambassador in Phnom Penh:

DEAR EXCELLENCY AND FRIEND: I thank you very sincerely for your letter and for your offer to transport me towards freedom. I cannot, alas, leave in such a

cowardly fashion. As for you, and in particular for your great country, I never believed for a moment that you would have this sentiment of abandoning a people which has chosen liberty. You have refused us your protection, and we can do nothing about it.

You leave, and my wish is that you and your country will find happiness under this sky. But, mark it well that if I shall die here on the spot and in my country that I love, it is too bad, because we are all born and must die one day.⁶⁵⁰

On 17 April Cambodia fell and Sirik Matak, like countless others, fell during the executions that followed the establishment of the Hammer and Sickle over Indochina. The North Vietnamese victory over the South on 30 April did not bring the reforms and liberties promised by the Vietcong. For there was no mention of the freedom of speech, press, assembly, and political organization that the National Liberation Front and North Vietnam promised—more broken words. A remorseful and broken Communist sympathizer who later suffered in the Vietnamese Gulag lamented:

Looking back now on the Vietnam War, I feel nothing but sorrow for my own naivete in believing that the Communists were revolutionaries worthy of support. In fact, they betrayed the Vietnamese people and deceived progressives throughout the world. The responsibility for the tragedies that have engulfed my compatriots is mine. And now I can only bear witness to this truth so that all former supporters of the Vietcong may share their responsibility with me.⁶⁵¹

And what remains of the Republic of Vietnam is now emblematic in the folded flag of that nation, encased in the basement of “Reunification Palace” in Saigon. For here is where this glorious and dusty cloth relic now rests along with the 1960s-era furniture only a few floors above, articles of life once used by South Vietnam’s leaders while planning a far different future— all that eerily remain as silent reminders of the vanquished dreams of an aborted past. Only the powerful memories and principles that animated a heroic people serve to remind the world of a cause that was worth fighting for—and, yes, worth dying for.

Living Images of the Poster

Indochina after the Vietnam War became yet another poster child of Communism. All the false images about Hanoi's character, held and easily dismissed later by the critics of the war, vanished in the realities of the post war world of Indochina. Mass murder, concentration camps, totalitarian control, terror and fear, and forced labor and conscription became common marks of the victory won by Hanoi and its allies. Even the Vietcong/the National Liberation Front disappeared in the deluge of power flowing from the North.

No, the ends do not justify the means but they do explain the beginnings. The intentions, plans, and actions implemented "step by step" from the feet of Ho Chi Minh in the North to the black rubber sandals of the Vietcong in the South replicated the misery and death trodden on Communist lands in Russia, China, North Korea, Poland, Cuba and elsewhere. The South Vietnamese proverb was indeed fulfilled: "Nothing grows on Communist soil."

But the propaganda poster that I encountered in Vietnam on my first trip had not lied. These aggressive images of Communist combatants streaming into the South told the story well. The Republic of Vietnam faced a ruthless enemy who invaded and conquered in 1975 like other militants in world history.

Yet the poster would not reveal the other side and the future. The blank background and absence of other visual subjects was indeed ominous. For the uncertain and abstract future of Indochina was about to be redrawn from its bare essence, conceptualized by hands that felt no compunction about erasing the smudges of life that interfered with the creative designs of Marxist imaginations.

Chapter 7

The Search for Beginnings . . . the Search for Endings

The beaches of Da Nang, Vietnam are quiet now. The rushing waves of the South China Sea roll across these shores carelessly and create a serenity that seems to contrast sharply the events of March 8, 1965 when American servicemen poured into this area with such resolve and urgency. Gentle breezes from the South China Sea embrace this area much like a kind Vietnamese grandmother who cuddles her grandchildren with a care tempered by the wisdom of time. The usually harsh tropical sun of Vietnam founders in the peaceful strength of these breezes and falls helplessly before the tranquility and majesty which emanate from mountain tops and landscapes that have become scenery for the tourists who visit this area.

Had not history made its indelible mark on these sands in step with the boot prints of American Marines one could quickly forget that America's war in Vietnam began here, at this point, a beachfront now marked with resorts and Westerners who seek relaxation and not combat. For at this spot the United States committed its ground forces--the young and brave Americans who basked in the victory that their parents had won through sacrifice and duty during World War II--and began the major commitment to contain Communism in Indochina.¹ Nearly three million Americans served in Vietnam, mostly the young, 58,000 who never returned alive, and others who came home and found far too much hostility and ingratitude for a "noble cause," as President Ronald Reagan later called it, which attempted to prevent the totalitarian reach of Communism from extending its arms further around the globe.²

But the efforts of many Americans to understand the Vietnam War and to find some purpose for that conflict involve far more than just a desire to study these basic facts about the war. Rather, many today are engaged in a deeply emotional search for *beginnings* of that war, at Da Nang or elsewhere. This fact is evident in the unrelenting flood of literature on the Vietnam War that continues to appear in the United States with the very purpose of finding and explaining these beginnings. But beyond all the books, arguments, and discussions on the war in Vietnam a haunting question still remains in the minds of many Americans: Why did we really get involved in the Vietnam War?

The popular search for beginnings of the war in Vietnam has a singular mission to answer that very question and to find root causes, critical moments in time, and decisive social and political influences of the war--issues that determined outcomes, influenced the lives of the combatants, and shaped the very character of America in the 1960s and afterward. The beginnings that are sought by many are not merely incidentals of war--stories of bravery, of victory, and of human interest. The beginnings define the war and capture its essence.

Unlike the history of other wars, which includes a diversity of subjects for study, much of the entire discussion of the Vietnam War centers exclusively on "the beginnings." General William Westmoreland, who during the 1960s led the bulk of American ground troops in Vietnam, lived his life after the war alienated from a public that could not understand his convictions about that conflict. He reflected much about the beginnings of the Vietnam War and noted:

There was no question about the overall objective--a free and independent South Vietnam. That was bipartisan. But the strategy that emerged was based on wishful thinking and faulty assumptions, particularly as to the nature of the threat and the character of the leadership in Hanoi. . . .

Then there was the fear of escalating the war and expanding it geographically thereby involving other countries in the fighting and extending the battle to the seas. It was a fear not shared with our enemies, who from *the beginning*, as they had made clear, were waging not the 'Vietnam War' but the 'Second Indochina War'.³

But the search for beginnings of the Vietnam War is likewise noteworthy because it stems from the conflictive passions that span the Vietnam War generation and those who have been influenced by their service. These conflictive passions include cynicism, frustrations, disillusionment, angers, confusions, and traumas on one hand, and on the other hand, justice, vindication, commemoration, respect, and healing. The search for beginnings generates much ideological conflict. Thus accounts of the beginnings of the Vietnam Conflict often demonstrate a strong point of view regarding international Communism, "American imperialism," nation building in South Vietnam, and "independence." Moreover, the search for beginnings also stems from deeply *internal* conflicts as some Vietnam veterans ponder, "What did my service in Vietnam really accomplish?"

From an individual perspective, the search for beginnings indicates that many Americans believe that their personal values and experiences are at stake as the writing of history continues to evaluate and to reevaluate the Vietnam War. The fact that many Vietnam veterans have undertaken a study of beginnings demonstrates that these Americans feel the need to defend the merit of their service against unfair criticism; for those veterans who have become discouraged, they appear to have a need to find that merit. The study of beginnings of the Vietnam War has produced inadvertently a significant sub-segment of American life, informal fraternities of Vietnam War enthusiasts, who react spontaneously at universities, schools, the workplace or donut shops when the topic of the Vietnam War arises in conversation and challenges their

particular values. Few other subjects in the history of the United States, whether remote or recent, arouse such passionate opinions among so many Americans today.

America's search for understanding about the war in Vietnam also includes a search for endings, a search to find the reasons why the war concluded with the conquest of South Vietnam by the Communists, who caused such emotional pain and suffering for those vowed never to allow that very ending. The memory of the solemn day in 1975 when North Vietnamese forces crashed through the gates of the Presidential Palace in Saigon and totalitarian hands hoisted the Red flag of Hanoi on high remains vivid in the minds of many Americans. A sense of loss permeates their thoughts as they reflect on the Vietnam War and its tragic outcome. Major George Petrie, U.S. Special Forces (Retired), recalled that bitter moment in history:

29 years ago today, I witnessed first hand, the greatest humiliation ever suffered by the United States of America--the fall of Republic of Vietnam. Vietnam fell, not because of those of us in the military who fought and died there, but because of American politicians and a weak American public who had lost the will to fight for freedom. When I rode that last helicopter out of Ton Sanh Nhut Airbase that night 29 years ago I could only think about not only my comrades in Special Forces who had paid the ultimate price but of all the 58,000 American soldiers who had died, literally for nothing, and the 1 million Vietnamese soldiers who had died defending their homeland. What a waste! A year later, 200,000 Vietnamese people voted with their feet, leaving their homeland forever in the face of North Vietnamese atrocities.⁴

Subsequently, the defeat created a lasting solemnity for the subject of the Vietnam War not found in the study of America's other wars, which have been crowned with victory and celebration. From this sense of loss many of these same people resolve never to allow a repeat of the mistakes that led to the end. Understanding the end of the Vietnam War therefore remains pivotal for critics and proponents of the war alike. For many Americans see in that conflict lessons and issue that are vital for determining American values or for determining future actions

that should be taken when the United States becomes involved in interventions abroad or wars in foreign lands.

Those who lived through the Vietnam War era have said that “Vietnam shook America to its core.” But after over a quarter of a century the “shaking” has not altogether stopped. Controversies and legacies of the war continue to intrude into not only foreign policy debates but also present military actions such as the war in Iraq, a military action that has brought much success and progress and yet suffers from unfounded criticism that compares both these military engagements without an accurate assessment of their differences, a legacy of the war attributed to “Vietnam syndrome,” the continuing legacy of the war. An understanding of the beginnings in Vietnam is therefore critical for understanding that conflict, but on a more fundamental level, for understanding America, our global mission, and ourselves. An American journalist noted in the early 1980s:

The war and its cultural ramifications provided the ritual passage to adulthood for a generation of Americans—my generation. It was a time when millions of us made the choices that would set the patterns of our lives. If we are to understand ourselves, it is necessary to know more intimately the event that propelled us onto our present course. Until we deal more honestly and thoroughly with the Vietnam War and the veterans of that war, we can’t expect to make much progress as individuals or as a nation.⁵

Not So Troubled Beginnings

While the landing of ground forces at Da Nang in 1965 certainly marked the point in time when the United States committed itself to a large-scale ground war in Vietnam, some have looked further back to the early Cold War era and considered it an important beginning. The Cold War period emerged immediately after World War II and stemmed from renewed tensions

and hostilities between Soviet Communism and American freedom, hostilities that predated World War II and that indicated a reassertion of Communist aggression since the threat of Fascism had been removed by that war.

The hostilities between Soviet Communism and American democracy preceded the Cold War era and were quite sharp throughout the 1920s and 1930s because of the fact that these Marxist-Leninists upheld the doctrine that the subversion of “the capitalist world” was essential to the viability and progress of international Communism.⁶ After the Fascist enemy had been defeated by 1945, the Communists faced new opportunities to renew their aggression in the “power vacuum” that existed internationally—the absence of lawful authority and the weakened state of Western powers like Great Britain--and to exploit a world where chaos, disorder, poverty, and devastation characterized the aftermath of the worst conflict in global history.

The Cold War policies of Presidents Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, and Richard M. Nixon--policies such as the “containment” of international Communism and “the domino theory”⁷--remain central to the search for beginnings. Many critics of the Vietnam War allege that these Presidents contrived policies that compelled America to fight a needless or “unwinnable” war in Vietnam, a land of questionable if not marginal strategic value for the United States.⁸

There is no doubt that Vietnam became an extremely complex foreign policy problem for the United States, a nightmare of sorts for strategists, a fomenting problem that intertwined colonialism, peasant grievances, nationalism, local and regional cultures, racism, and international Communism—an imbroglio that required an immediate and measured response by Washington. Many American foreign policymakers often admitted as much but found that Ho Chi Minh, the Moscow-trained “revolutionary” of Indochina, had manipulated these legitimate

aspirations and problems for Communist ends while misrepresenting the true designs and intentions of North Vietnam, just as other Communist leaders in Russia, China and elsewhere had misrepresented earlier their true intentions.⁹

Communism in Indochina, therefore, was the preeminent issue among many there, one that threatened regional security in Southeast Asia and furthered the international Soviet alliance against the United States. Many American policymakers acknowledged the legitimacy and reality of nationalism and independence movements in that region but concluded that these political goals could not be realized through the totalitarian and inhumane policies of the Communist movements.¹⁰

That said, the Presidents who led America into Vietnam could not hide their frustrations over the difficulties of fighting in Indochina, no matter how clear the cause. As the cost of containing North Vietnam's aggression mounted during the 1960s and strained the emotions and economy of the United States, President Johnson remarked in anguish:

I knew from the start. . . that I was bound to be crucified either way I moved. If I left the woman I really loved—the Great Society—in order to get involved with that bitch of a war on the other side of the world, then I would lose everything at home. All my programs. All my hopes to provide education and medical care to the browns and the blacks and the lame and the poor. But if I left that war and let the Communists take over South Vietnam, then I would be seen as a coward and my nation would be seen as an appeaser and we would both find it impossible to accomplish anything for anybody anywhere on the entire globe.¹¹

However, Stanley Karnow, one of the more popular writers about the Vietnam War and former correspondent for the *New York Times*, asserted that America's historical penchant for moral crusading in world affairs, rather than Communist aggression, was the chief reason that caused the United States to fight a war in Vietnam.¹² Karnow stated that the United States'

global mission to spread “freedom” and “civilization” (Western civilization and Christianity) was neither malicious nor conspiratorial but misguided, naive, and unrealistic.

He argued further that while American policymakers led the United States to fight Communism in Vietnam, they failed to understand the sentiments and resolve of the enemy, forged by hundreds of years of resistance to foreign invaders. Karnow’s critical views of the war, which are quite sharp at times, have won over a wide audience despite their shallowness. And most recently, he has asserted them with renewed vigor:

Recently, in an attempt to justify the U.S. commitment, a featherweight group of neoconservative think-tankers (few of whom have any firsthand experience of either the country or the war) has begun rattling 30-year-old sabers, alleging that America broke its ‘word of honor’ to its ally, asserting that the war could have been won and reviving the dubious domino theory thesis that the war was necessary to halt the Soviet Union’s global aspirations. This revisionist wave has been successful in landing its exponents on talk shows. It has been far less successful at convincing most experts. This is not surprising, for it has little basis in fact.¹³

Karnow attacked the Presidents and policymakers of the Cold War era for misunderstanding not only the culture and politics of the era and the region but also the chief personality of the war, Ho Chi Minh. Rather than a Communist puppet of Moscow, Karnow stated, Ho was more a “nationalist”—implying that he had the better interests of the people of Vietnam at heart (basically) and not the strategic interests of international Communism. The former Chief Asian correspondent for the *New York Times* asserted again: “Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese communist leader, had been a covert Soviet agent, but he was essentially a nationalist. During World War II he organized a guerrilla force to fight against the Japanese, one of the few Asian leaders to do so; American advisors flew in to equip and train his men.”¹⁴

Most policymakers during the administrations of presidents Truman and Eisenhower, as well as subsequent presidential administrations, never countenanced such notions for the simple

reason that they were obviously false. During the post-World War II era Communist activities in Southeast Asia were moving at a relentless and often concerted pace that challenged the weak states of that region.¹⁵

In Indochina, Ho Chi Minh developed a regional Communist movement that aimed at spreading totalitarianism throughout Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, and beyond. Moreover, he denounced “nationalism” from his earliest days and considered it a destructive and “dangerous” ideology that impeded international Communism.¹⁶ Ho, a master of manipulation and deception, forbade nationalism as a driving ideology from entering his Communist movement and only allowed a pretext and appearance of these ideas in order to attract followers to his cause.

But for “Uncle Ho,” as Ho Chi Minh was commonly called, opposition to nationalism necessitated far more severe action than just using revolutionary rhetoric; he ordered the brutal killing (“purging”) of Vietnamese nationalists who fought patriotically for a free and independent Vietnam, often years before Vietnam’s wars with France and the United States. While many historians have been quick to record Ho Chi Minh’s struggles against the oppression of French colonialism, few writers have underscored Ho Chi Minh’s merciless campaign against Vietnamese nationalists.¹⁷ Rather than a “Vietnamese nationalist” searching to find the road to independence for Vietnam, Ho Chi Minh demonstrated a rigid adherence to Communism from his earliest days in the 1920s--and a noticeable antipathy for the United States during the same period.

In addition to policy decisions, the search for beginnings includes a consideration of intrinsic or structural factors of the government of the United States. Some critics of the Vietnam War who have searched for beginnings of the Vietnam War have challenged pointedly

the reliability of the intelligence establishment in Washington. Although detailed reports about the evolving crisis in Vietnam flooded Washington from the early 1950s, many historians and observers of the war have concluded that America's leaders relied upon poor intelligence information that ensued from the removal and the intimidation of experts on East Asia during the years of anti-Communist hysteria that occurred immediately prior to America's major involvement in Vietnam.¹⁸

During the early Cold War period, the Federal government of the United States conducted a series of investigations on espionage and Communist activities that included: the House Un-American Activities Committee; a "Loyalty program" authorized by President Truman for officials in the executive branch of government; and numerous investigations of Communist activities by state governments: all these led to the examination, censorship, and removal of personnel in the government and other major American institutions--including universities, trade unions, and entertainment industries.¹⁹ Coupled with high-profile public trials of Soviet spies like Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were both executed for their crimes, the political climate of the era encouraged popular antipathies toward Communism, sometimes to a fanatical level.

According to the argument of these critics, some of the most knowledgeable "experts" on East Asia, pundits from the leading universities in the United States for example, needlessly lost their jobs and the opportunity to provide important information on Vietnam's history, politics, and customs. Other policy analysts allegedly glossed over problems for fear that they would appear sympathetic to Communism. Left with only amateur, inept, inexperienced or intimidated sources, Washington drew faulty conclusions and calculated erroneous policies regarding Vietnam. Consequently, proponents of this notion assert that the United States stumbled through

Southeast Asia, blinded by its own ignorance, limited by its own prejudice, and victimized by its own doing.²⁰

But this argument against the reliability of the intelligence establishment likewise fails to reflect accurately the facts and to reach substantial conclusions regarding the origins of the war in Vietnam. Rather than blind optimism, rigidity of policy, or conformity of thought, the historical records of the government show an accurate intelligence assessment of the dangers and the complexities of the situation there. Intelligence analysts understood the difficulty of winning over a populace in Vietnam that was either apathetic or deceived by Communist propaganda. Intelligence sources noted the weaknesses and limitations of alliances with the French or South Vietnamese nationalists like Ngo Dinh Diem, who too often alienated instead of endearing the Vietnamese people. But one such source, from the State Department, also concluded about the problem of creating unity in South Vietnam: “. . . difficult as this may be to achieve, it is possible, in my opinion.”²¹

Experienced intelligence operatives like Air Force Colonel Edward Lansdale, who had gained much experience fighting Communists in the Philippines, found the transition to service in Vietnam far from impossible. Many foreign service officers like Lansdale drew from extensive experience fighting against the tactics of Communist insurgents and found a commonality of techniques and ploys used by the Huks (Filipino Communists), Vietminh (Vietnamese Communists), Pathet Lao (Laotian Communists) and other Marxist revolutionaries. Although Lansdale, like other counterinsurgents, admitted candidly that his knowledge of Vietnam was limited, the Communist activities in the region were typical of other areas where Marxism-Leninism had operated and therefore easier to understand than many historians have insisted. He observed after his arrival in Vietnam: “I had only a smattering of French so I relied

heavily on interpreters, sign-language, and a pocket dictionary. The people were strikingly different from the Filipinos, but the guerrilla methods of the Communists were all too familiar. . . .”²²

Lansdale, typical of the dedicated and the selfless service personnel in Vietnam, was committed to furthering not just American interests but also the interests of the Vietnamese people. He knew well that American political objectives must coincide with the interests of the Vietnamese people in order to achieve the success that these allies desired.²³ He also knew that fair and compassionate attention to the needs of the Vietnamese people was far more important than mastering the details of a foreign language and culture. One of Lansdale’s fellow operatives noted about him:

But it was very obvious to the Vietnamese after a while that we were there to help them. It wasn’t an ego trip. We had no ulterior motive. We were not trying to do something purely in the interest of the United States. When we’d have Vietnamese come in and say, ‘I want to work for you,’ Lansdale would say, ‘Well, I don’t want you to work for us. You should be working to help your government.’ Then the guy would say, ‘There’s nobody in the government to hire me.’

‘Well, we’ll help you for a while,’ Lansdale would say, ‘but then you get a job with the government. Were not signing you up on the dotted line. You aren’t an agent of the United States.’ So that established a bond of trust with the Vietnamese. Lansdale could establish trust with Asians very, very quickly. He had a way of communicating even though he didn’t speak either French or Vietnamese.²⁴

Moreover, the chief executives during the early Cold War period remained clear-sighted and moderate in their analysis of the Communist threat and in their reaction to it. Both Truman and Eisenhower made repeated admonitions against extreme and authoritarian measures aimed at defending against Communist aggression at home and abroad.²⁵ Rather than focusing entirely on the threat of Communism and allowing politics, exaggerations, and fears to distort his

administration's perspectives, Truman, in cooperation with Secretary of State Dean Acheson, understood that the central problem of resisting Communism in Indochina involved the "fence-sitting" of the people--the failure of many to choose sides until a clear winner emerged in the struggle between the two opposing forces of totalitarianism and freedom, respectively.²⁶ During the turbulence of the Cold War, both Presidents remained committed to addressing the economic problems and physical security of the peoples of Southeast Asia and believed that by meeting those needs these Asian peoples would support the cause of freedom and democracy against Communism--an enticement to get off the fence.

Yet most modern histories that address the Cold War period in the United States mislead their readers by focusing on extreme cases of anti-Communism while denying two critical points: first, the threat of Communist subversion was very real; second, America's presidents during that challenging time successfully guarded against extreme anti-Communism and protected the fundamental rights of American citizens.²⁷ Liberal historians delight in depicting the entire anti-Communist movement and era as a "witch hunt" and thus have created the false perception that U.S. Senators like Joseph McCarthy were typical.

These historians further conclude that McCarthy's unsubstantiated allegations and demagogic tactics regarding Communist subversion proved that it was not a serious threat both domestically and abroad. Focusing on the abuses to the exclusion of all other relevant matters, the critics overlook the many testimonies of Communists who have admitted their culpability in the matter, refuse to acknowledge that these infiltrations occurred globally, and hide the fact that Marxist-Leninist policy directives indicated that such activities occurred regularly as a part of that movement's practices.²⁸

Moreover, all the talk about “the secret history of the war” and “conspiracy” has caused many Americans to conclude that the government of the United States, particularly the presidents of the Vietnam War era, deceived the American people on the real reasons why the United States became involved in the war. Even though mounds of “top secret” documents from the State Department, Department of Defense, Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Security Council have been declassified and made public since the end of the war, not one shred of evidence exists that indicates that the Communist threat in Vietnam and Southeast Asia was not real and was not a serious challenge to the security of the United States.²⁹

Rather than contriving a grand conspiracy, students of history can find that in the most secret and private moments in the Oval Office the presidents sought humane solutions to the perplexing problems of fighting against a very real Communist insurgency directed by Hanoi and supported by Moscow and Beijing (Peking). “[The President]’s the poor bastard that stays awake every night on these things,” President Johnson said to advisor McGeorge Bundy as a reminder to him and to critics of the war in the Senate who overlooked the serious efforts that the executive office had made to find a negotiated peace in Vietnam.³⁰

In the mid-1960s during a private conversation between President Johnson and former president Eisenhower, Americans who are concerned about national honor can find a candid admission of problems, and, nevertheless, a resolve of both men to better the lives, the economics, and the security of the Vietnamese people. A part of the conversations follows:

Eisenhower: This poor little devil down there that’s trying to make a living on an acre of ground or rice, why. . . he’s the fellow we’re trying to get at now. . . .

LBJ: Yes. . . there are two places that we have been very deficient. One is in that respect. The other is getting a government that can see this thing through. . . . Of course, their morale’s bad. . . . I’ve got to strengthen it. . . .

Eisenhower: That's right. . . . We never can keep a government up there just with bayonets. It's got to be with the consent and desires of the people. That is the problem. . . . If we're going to save a nation, we've to go after their minds and hearts as well as we do at their stomach. . . .

LBJ: . . . I don't think you could be more right.³¹

New Beginnings: A Cold War, A Hot Economy, and Many Warm Hearts

A major consequence of the search for beginnings of the Vietnam Conflict is that far more than historical accuracy has been sacrificed, for the search is much more than a mere academic issue. Far too often the search for beginnings of the Vietnam War has ridiculed American leaders, institutions, values, and sacrifices while shifting the blame from the victimizer to the victim. Errors in judgment are exaggerated into allegations of depravity of motives; shortcomings and incidental problems are twisted into "evidence of the corruption" of the whole; and accountability is placed on the shoulders of one side and not the other. For many, the search for beginnings of the Vietnam War has degenerated into an embittered venting of anti-American passions under the guise of historical truth.

Unfortunately for many Americans, particularly young Americans who have been exposed to the distorted legacy of the Vietnam War, the search for beginnings has obscured the idealism and historic global achievements of the United States during the post-World War II era. The presumptuous notions that underpin many of the anti-Vietnam war arguments have caused many to overlook two major events which dominated the era. First, the United States undertook an ambitious effort to create a global security framework that produced a far greater and durable

peace than had previously existed, a mission that succeeded despite the major problems of the Cold War.

Second, during the period, the United States achieved the greatest level of economic prosperity in world history, a success that generated and motivated passionate loyalties to the country and a belief that America's wealth could help to raise the hopes and living standards of the peoples of the world.³² These desires for peace, security, and prosperity permeated American society and government and created a powerful idealism in the United States that influenced many to resist Communist totalitarianism as it advanced through the impoverished areas of the world—including the advances in Vietnam.

As the dark clouds of World War II cast their shadows over America in early 1941 and indicated that war was imminent for the United States, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's still envisioned a world in which global security would rest upon "the Four Freedoms"---freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want, and freedom from fear. He repeated these themes during the war. Along with British Prime Minister Winston Churchill during the creation of the Atlantic Charter later that year, Roosevelt stated that "after the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, [we] hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all the men in all lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want."³³

President Truman shared his predecessor's vision of creating a free world and publicly stated these goals immediately after he took the oath of office. In 1945 he stated before the Congress of the United States that these freedoms needed to be defended and that global peace required collective security:

But hope alone was not and is not sufficient to avert war. We must not only have hope but we must have faith enough to work with other peace-loving nations to maintain the peace. Hope was not enough to beat back the aggressors as long as the peace-loving nations were unwilling to come to each other's defense. The aggressors were beaten back only when the peace-loving nations united to defend themselves.³⁴

At the end of World War II, despite the differences between Soviet Communism and American democracy, many Americans expected to continue the productive relations that had been forged with the Grand Alliance during the war and expected that the Soviet Union would participate in the postwar global security arrangements.³⁵ Until Soviet ambitions began to threaten democracies and international security shortly thereafter, many Americans and government leaders believed that even though both systems were very different ideologically they could still coexist in peace. President Truman remarked about this period at length:

During the war, we worked with the Soviet Union wholeheartedly in defeating the common enemy. In every way we could, we tried to convince the Soviet government that it was possible and necessary for allied unity to continue in the great task of establishing the peace. We hoped that the Soviet Union, secure in her own strength and doubly secure in the respect of her allies, would accept full partnership in a peaceful world community.

The record, however, is clear for all to read. The Soviet Government has rejected the invitation to participate, freely and on equal terms, in a great cooperative program for the reconstruction of Europe. It has constantly maneuvered for delay and for propaganda effect in every international conference. It has used the veto excessively and unreasonably in the Security Council of the United Nations. It has boycotted the 'Little Assembly' and several United Nations commissions. It has used indirect aggression against a number of nations in Eastern Europe and extreme pressure against others in the Middle East. It has intervened in the internal affairs of many other countries by means of Communist parties directed from Moscow.

The refusal of the Soviet Union to work with its wartime allies for world recovery and World peace is the most bitter disappointment of our time.³⁶

The breach in relations between the United States and its Soviet ally challenged the idealistic beliefs of many Americans and forced them to continue the struggle against

international aggression. As the Cold War emerged onto the world scene as an undeniable reality, many Americans began to accept the painful truth that World War I, “the war to end all wars,” and World War II were important but single episodes in the struggle against global tyranny rather than conclusive victories over the enemies of freedom. Presidents Roosevelt and Truman intended that global security arrangements would include the Soviets. Instead, the Soviets emerged as the chief antagonist of international peace and security and sought to hinder the creation of global alliances that included “capitalist nations.”³⁷

As Americans lived within “a shrinking world,” as President Truman called it, a modern world that increasingly tied the fate of its population to common issues, citizens across the country responded to Truman’s call to remember the lessons of World War II and unite with peace-loving nations to resist international Communism before it became strong enough to create a cataclysmic disaster of another world war. On March 12, 1947, Truman gave a speech outlining the need to assist Greece and Turkey in their struggle against Communism. In that speech, later regarded as the pronouncement of the Truman Doctrine, the President underscored the need for global security through the support of free nations and those resisting Communism:

We shall not realize our objectives, however, unless we are willing to help free peoples to maintain their free institutions and their national integrity against aggressive movements that seek to impose upon them totalitarian regimes. This is no more than a frank recognition that totalitarian regimes imposed on free peoples, by direct or indirect aggression, undermine the foundations of international peace and hence the security of the United States.³⁸

But the threat of international Communism extended far beyond Greece and Turkey, both in magnitude and reach. Stalin’s wartime promises of “fifty years of peace” with the West soon proved to be empty. The Soviets reneged on their promise to support free elections in Eastern Europe, as well as Korea, and annexed the former in violation of their pledges. In addition to

supporting subversive Communist groups throughout the world, and in the United States, the Soviets committed open acts of aggression including the blockade of Berlin in June 1948 and support of the North Korean invasion of South Korea two years later. The 81st Congress of the United States stated the matter succinctly:

There exists a world Communist movement which, in its origins, its development, and its present practice, is a world-wide revolutionary movement whose purpose it is, by treachery, deceit, infiltration into other groups (governmental and otherwise), espionage, sabotage, terrorism, and any other means deemed necessary, to establish a Communist totalitarian dictatorship in the countries throughout the world through the medium of a world-wide Communist organization. . . .³⁹

The Truman administration called these efforts “a monstrous conspiracy to stamp out freedom all over the world.”⁴⁰ In his assertion of the Truman Doctrine, the President outlined the very essence of the Communist challenge, this conspiracy to impose Communism globally. Although Left-wing historians have made a serious effort to discredit these assumptions, no credible study has ever disproved Truman’s assessment of the Communist threat. He noted the key characteristics of all these revolutions—characteristics that proved true even after Truman’s death:

1. Communist movements and “liberations” were never undertaken by a majority but rather an armed minority imposing their totalitarian system by violence against the wishes of the majority.
2. Communist movements manipulated poverty and distress and never alleviated these problems according to the aspirations and will of the populace.
3. Communist movements relied upon subversion of a country’s key institutions and power positions and never relied on open political processes such as political debate and fair elections.
4. Communist movements operated from safe havens and bases in foreign countries, often contiguous countries where these subversive groups and aggressions were spawned.

5. The Soviet Union, to varying degrees and with various methods, supported, aided, and directed these movements internationally.

6. These Communist movements led by the Soviet Union undermined international security, including the security of the United States. ⁴¹



President Harry Truman Established the National Security Council, 1948

In reaction to the threat of international Communism, the United States lead many free and developing nations around the world in the creation of regional associations such as NATO (The North Atlantic Treaty Organization), METO (Middle East Treaty Organization), and SEATO (Southeast Asia Treaty Organization), which not only created much needed security against Communist aggression but also provided the security and basis of cooperation necessary for vibrant regional trade.⁴² The combination of regional security and free trade provided the

framework for many East Asian countries to grow into democratic and prosperous modern societies, complete with many of the benefits of industrial societies in the West.

First in Japan and the Philippines, and shortly thereafter in Taiwan, South Korea, and Thailand, the “friendly nations” of East Asia led the region in prosperity and served as examples to the success of the Free World and the failure of the Communist states. Soviet sources vehemently denounced these international and regional associations of nations and condemned them for alleged militaristic intentions:

The United States financial tycoons are engineering a ‘holy alliance’ of imperialists and founding aggressive military blocs. American troops are stationed at the most important points of the capitalist world. . . . The American monopoly and their British and French allies are openly assisting the resurgence of West German imperialism, which is cynically advocating aggressive aims of revenge and preparing a war against the Socialist countries and other European states. A dangerous center of aggression, imperiling the peace and security of all peoples, is being revived in the heart of Europe. In the Far East the American monopolies are reviving Japanese militarism, another dangerous hotbed of war threatening the countries of Asia and, above all, the Socialist countries.⁴³

The alliance system held firmly during the Cold War with few exceptions.⁴⁴ Communist subversions, insurgencies, and the so-called “wars of national liberation” failed in Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Thailand, Burma, and in many other areas beyond East Asia. Meanwhile, Europe remained safe from further Soviet encroachments and later, during the late 1980s, witnessed the beginning of the unraveling of the Communist Bloc.

Furthermore, an achievement of epochal importance occurred. The security arrangements built during the Cold War endured through the era and now remain vital to the present peace and economic prosperity of the globe, particularly in East Asia. America’s

“forward presence” in that region has fostered the continuous peace, economic growth, and democratic progress of nations like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Thailand.

The strength of America’s resistance to Communism, however, rested not merely in collective security, a global alliance of free nations and supporters of the West. The American people enthusiastically supported efforts to resist international Communism. Those Americans living in the post-World War II era gained an appreciation or deeper appreciation for life in America, and conversely an antipathy for Communism, by sharing in the phenomenal increase in wealth that occurred across the United States, a prosperity that raised their optimism as much as their incomes.

What took place from 1945 to 1960 was nothing less than an economic transformation that historians have described as “miraculous.”⁴⁵ During the period the gross national product grew by 250 percent. Inflation remained around 3 percent a year or lower while unemployment stayed near 5 percent or less through the 1950s and early 1960s. Government spending on schools, highways, and defense needs coupled with rising consumer consumption stemming from a population increase of nearly 20 percent during the 1950s (“the baby boom era”) created a foundation for prolonged growth. Historian Alan Brinkley remarked:

Because of this unprecedented growth, the economy grew nearly ten times as fast as the population in the thirty years after the war. And while that growth was far from equally distributed, it affected most of society. The average American in 1960 had over 20 percent more purchasing power than in 1945, and more than twice as much as during the prosperous 1920s. The American people had achieved the highest standard of living of any society in the history of the world.⁴⁶

Lost in the obscurity created by many reckless accounts of beginnings of the war in Vietnam is yet another remarkable story from the era: many diverse ethnic groups entered mainstream America with raised incomes, standards of living, and expectations. Rare in world

history was the amalgamation of “foreigners” into a host society. While individuals throughout history have achieved this very feat, few ethnic groups as a whole have assimilated rapidly into their new surrounding, without centuries of slow and painful assimilation and significant loss of cultural and racial distinctions.

The “new immigrants” who had arrived in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries--mostly Eastern and Southeastern Europeans from Russia, Poland, Italy, Greece, and other nations--people who had arrived in waves by the thousands, found that within a few generations that they could lift themselves and their families out of poverty. By the 1950s and 1960s many of the children and grandchildren of these immigrant groups had served in World War II and were leading comfortable middle-class lives afterward or lives far more prosperous than that of their parents. In 1966, famous Hollywood actor Kirk Douglas described the patriotism that had been created by the economic advancement of the children of immigrants like himself and others:

You know, I’m one of the typical examples of America at work. My parents came from Russia, and they were illiterate immigrants. I taught my mother how to sign her name. They come here, they work hard, we don’t have enough to eat--all that kind of corn. I say corn because it happened to so many people it became ordinary, and if anybody gave it to me as a script for a movie, I’d never do it. It would make a lousy movie! Still it’s true and who can say it’s not a big part of what America is? You come out of a background like that, you manage to get a college education, then you go into the work that you wanted to do, and finally you make it big. But the more I travel, the more I see that this is the only country where you have that much of a chance to do it.⁴⁷

“Middle America” had grown larger and had emerged from the postwar era as patriotic as ever, ready to defend the values that made America great and made her distinguished among other nations of the world. Most of America, regardless of class, remained united in the hope of a better future.⁴⁸ The youth of America often embraced American values and anti-Communism

for reasons found in the prosperity, success, and freedoms that surrounded them, reasons that Founding Father Thomas Jefferson would have considered “self-evident” truths.

Furthermore, Middle America prospered ideologically as well as economically because of the fact that the American educational system validated and nurtured the patriotic truths that walked hand in hand with the economic success. American school children learned in their public schools that America was unique in its quality of life, economic prosperity, freedoms, and mission. These children learned furthermore that *The Declaration of Independence* and the American *Constitution* were sacred documents that time had proven to be strong supports to the prosperity of the country and blessings of each American.

Many school children embraced these ideas and believed that these principles must be defended as ardently as the Founding Fathers defended them.⁴⁹ During President Reagan’s farewell speech in 1989, he praised the patriotism of that era and remarked:

An informed patriotism is what we want. And are we doing a good enough job teaching our children what America is and what she represent in the long history of the world? Those of us who are over 35 years or so of age grew up in a different America. We were taught, very directly, what it means to be an American. And we absorbed, almost in the air, a love of country and an appreciation of its institutions. If you didn’t get these things from your family, you got them from the neighborhood, from the father down the street who fought in Korea or the family who lost someone at Anzio. Or you could get a sense of patriotism from school. And if all else failed, you could get a sense of patriotism from popular culture. The movies celebrated democratic values and implicitly reinforced the idea that America was special. TV was like that, too, through the mid-’60s.⁵⁰

The patriotism generated among many Americans, children and adults, served as the basis of national defense and future security. A deeply-felt patriotism warmed the hearts of many Americans across the country, a spirit that animated them to defend the values and freedoms of a land that had been serious challenged by Communist totalitarianism. Throughout

the time, Americans guarded their freedoms, defended against the loss of these human rights, and sought a means to secure these liberties for future generations. President Truman noted this phenomena at the onset of the Cold War and remarked:

It is the American spirit, not our wealth, that gives us strength. It is the spirit of a free people, devoted to liberty and justice. It is the spirit of a people who are peaceful—peaceful and unafraid. This is the kind of national defense that I believe in. This is the kind of national spirit which makes America's strength so important a force for peace in the whole world. National defense begins at home. It begins with the things that makes life worthwhile for the average industrial worker, for the average farmer, for the average small businessman.”⁵¹

But not everyone responded so patriotically to the benefits of American life, the higher values, the economic prosperity, and the freedoms that many cherished. Some Americans, and even ones who later served in Vietnam, did not look beyond their personal experiences and selfish interests to see the “bigger picture,” the aspirations of a determined Communist enemy who sought to harm the lives and well being of Americans and their allies.

To these disgruntled Americans, career ambitions, a negative experience with a recruiter, the poor leadership of a unit commander, personal hardships, and the realities of a soldier's life made the Vietnam War “a mistake,” “a misadventure,” and “a tragedy.” One Vietnam veteran recalled his painful personal reasons for enlisting and revealed his negative view of the war in Vietnam:

I was young, stupid, ignorant, along with all the other clowns. Man, we signed up for four years not thinking, ‘Hey, if I go in with the Army, I’ll be going in for two. Here I am signing up for four years just to get an extra thirty days before they take me.’ Which I didn’t get thirty days anyway.

That’s not really the whole story. My brother had died that same year and I was ready to get out of the house because we had always shared the same room. All of a sudden, after eighteen years—*whoom*—he’s not there no more. My older brothers, they didn’t really live with us, so it was all right when they weren’t around. But the one who lived close with me, I was missing him too much. I was breaking ties with a lot of friends, because when I saw them coming down the

block, I was expecting to see my brother with them, popping up, whistling to let me know he was there.

So it was good for me to leave home when I did. I didn't think in terms of what I did to my mother. She had just lost one son, and there's another one going off to some stupid war. Much later, after I thought about it, I had the chance to apologize. But she said she understood, that it was okay.⁵²

Indeed, along with Americans who drank and ate the “milk and honey” of American life were some other Americans who refused to do so, and then, figuratively speaking, criticized that milk for turning sour in their glass. Prosperity, our Founding Fathers warned, could spoil as well as bless America.⁵³ As the Vietnam War continued into the middle and late 1960s, a vocal minority arose who demonstrated that fact and championed personal liberty at the expense of community safety and national security.

Despite their purported themes of racial equality and human dignity, the themes of the “generation of love” were often simplistic and hedonistic while championing the Communists, who had done more to harm public safety and personal liberties than any other organized group or movement. Anti-American slogans abounded from “the New Left”--“America kills peasants”; “the Vietcong are freedom fighters”; “Ho Chi Minh is right”--and the United States was depicted as the source of global conflicts and problems.⁵⁴

The Vietnam War protestors and malcontents of the “Hippie era” mouthed the propaganda of Hanoi with a blind and unabashed foolishness that could not be excused by just considering the inexperience of youth. Never a majority, these critics of American life were a striking contrast to the brave men and women who supported the war and served their country in Vietnam. In 1968, even after many Americans had grown dispirited with Washington's management of the war, the American people demonstrated their contempt of the antiwar

movement by indicating in a public opinion poll that it was the least favored organization or political force in the United States.⁵⁵

The very experience of war tries a nation's patriotism—a nation's will and "conscience"--as certainly as those who were tried in the battle fields of Vietnam. In the eighteenth century, our Founding Fathers warned that a recourse to arms should not be taken up lightly. Consequently, they deliberated at length and then pledged their "lives, fortunes and sacred honor" to defeat a real enemy: they never wavered thereafter. But for every American patriot who took up arms against England there was another American who fought against them, and yet another who cared little for the cause. And before victory at Yorktown there was suffering, betrayal, and defeats: Valley Forge, Benedict Arnold at the Hudson River Valley, and the evacuation of Philadelphia serve as examples, respectively. Nevertheless, from the commitment of the Founding Fathers a revolution and a nation were born, which bore the distinct characteristics of its consecration to liberty and freedom.⁵⁶

The experience of war in Vietnam was no different in these essential characteristics. As the body count mounted some Americans began to question whether the war in the hot and remote jungles of Southeast Asia was worth the sacrifice. On February 18, 1963, after losing a brother in a helicopter crash in Vietnam, a grieving sister wrote President John F. Kennedy, seeking consolation and understanding regarding the war in Vietnam and the tragic death of her beloved brother. She painfully questioned in that letter:

Please, I'm only a housewife who doesn't even claim to know all about the international situation—but we have felt so bitter over this—can the small number of our boys over in Viet Nam possibly be doing enough good to justify the awful number of casualties? It seems to me that if we are going to have our boys over there, that we should send enough to have a chance--or else stay home. Those fellows are just sitting ducks in those darn helicopters. If a war is worth fighting --isn't it worth fighting to win?

Please answer this and help me and my family to reconcile ourselves to our loss and to feel that even though Jim died in Viet Nam—and it isn't our war—it wasn't in vain.⁵⁷

Kennedy wrote back shortly thereafter and addressed the issue delicately but firmly, consoling the grieving sister and reminding her of the just reasons for American involvement in Vietnam. His words are noteworthy about his commitment to the struggle in Vietnam as well as the importance of the cause there:

Americans are in Vietnam because we have determined that this country must not fall under Communist domination. Ever since Viet Nam was divided, the Viet Nameese have fought valiantly to maintain their independence in the face of the continuing threat from the North. Shortly after the division eight years ago it became apparent that they could not be successful in their defense without extensive assistance from other nations of the Free World community. . . .

If Viet Nam should fall, it will indicate to the people of Southeast Asia that complete Communist domination of their part of the world is almost inevitable. Your brother was in Viet Nam because the threat to the Viet Nameese people is, in the long run, a threat to the Free World community, and ultimately a threat to us also. For when freedom is destroyed in one country, it is threatened throughout the world.⁵⁸

During these patriotic times, the attempts of the Communist world to discredit American prosperity and values created a deeper revulsion of Marxism-Leninism among the American people rather than the reverse. The vast majority of Americans believed that the economic policies of Communism were flawed as much as the totalitarian and brutal socio-political policies of the same.

Nonetheless, the Communist bloc released a flood of defamatory propaganda during the Cold War that blatantly falsified the intents of the United States and its allies, accusing them of economic exploitation and military aggression. In 1961 the official Soviet view of the United States included a criticism of American capitalism that appears as false now as it did then:

Mankind has learned the true face of capitalism. Hundreds of millions of people see that capitalism is a system of economic chaos and periodical crises, chronic unemployment, mass poverty, and indiscriminate waste of productive forces—a system constantly fraught with the danger of war. Mankind does not want to, and will not, tolerate the historically outdated capitalist system.⁵⁹

Chinese Communists leaders under Mao Zedong made the preposterous assertion to their people that Japanese capitalists had created such a rapacious industrial environment that the citizens of Tokyo had to use gas masks just to survive the industrial toxins from factories there. Moreover, while North Vietnam planned its covert invasion of the South after the Geneva Accords of 1954, a plan that was executed in 1959, Hanoi's propaganda asserted the very reverse, alleging that the South was conspiring to invade North.⁶⁰

However, behind the wall of propaganda lies and the barbed wire fences that comprised “the Iron Curtain” and “bamboo curtain” erected by the Communist bloc to hide the prosperity of the Free World and shut out the light of freedom, stood a system with cracks in its very foundation. Astute American policymakers like George F. Kennan noted that the Communist world led by the Soviet Union could not survive indefinitely behind a propaganda shield that deflected attention from the deficiencies of that system.⁶¹ Kennan was not alone in his assessment that the oppressive censorship of the Soviet empire indicated that it feared that the truth and the benefits of freedom would damage if not destroy the very notion of Communism.

The problems and shortcomings of the Communist world during the Cold War, particularly the economic success of the United States and the Free World, did not deter the dedication and fervency of pupils of Vladimir I. Lenin, the founder of Soviet Communism. International Communism fought tenaciously against its repeated failures: economic and political. Even though the Soviet alliance reeled under the challenges of ideological dissent within the movement (“revisionism”), conflict with China (the Sino-Soviet split), and economic

backwardness (which they usually attributed to a lack of attention to Marxist-Leninist ideology), the Communist world remained committed to destroying the capitalist world and its vital center, the United States.

In July 1963 Adlai Stevenson, United States ambassador to the United Nations, stated the matter clearly when he declared that “we face in Communist hostility and expansionism a formidable force, whether Mr. Khrushchev and Mr. Mao Tse-tung pull together or apart. They disagree so far only on whether capitalism should be peacefully or violently buried. They are both for the funeral.”⁶² Soviet Chairman Nikita S. Khrushchev indeed boasted to the capitalist world at a diplomatic reception in 1956 that “Whether you like it or not, history is on our side. We will bury you.”⁶³ But history later recorded the death and burial of the Soviet Union and with it the driving force of Communism worldwide.

However, the economic prosperity of the United States during the early Cold War era influenced more than just the average American but even Washington’s policymakers and advisors—many individuals who later served in Vietnam. American policymakers denounced territorial annexation and alteration as a chief means of gaining security for the United States and underscored the usefulness of economic development as a primary means to that end.⁶⁴

The early Cold War presidents used America’s prosperity to help the peoples of other countries, desiring to generate prosperity abroad and to create the economic conditions that would deny the Communists the opportunity to exploit poverty and misery. The fact that the economy of the United States alone emerged from the war intact and vibrant moved many Americans to believe that this outcome was the work of Providence, which mandated a duty to extend that prosperity to others around the globe.

And Europe certainly needed this economic support. After World War II, the economies of Great Britain, France, and Germany (among others in Europe) lay prostrated before the hopes, courage, and determination of the war-ravaged souls and youth who emerged from such places as London, Paris, and Frankfurt, people of a new era who arose from the rubble of history's most horrific war. The famous Marshall Plan, named after Secretary of State George C. Marshall who served during the Truman administration, was a monumental achievement in helping many of these Europeans to recover from the war and to resist the subversive attempts of Communism.⁶⁵ In less than four years after the implementation of the plan, Europe's economy increased by nearly 25 percent.⁶⁶ Britain's Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin said that this aid was "like a lifeline to sinking men."⁶⁷ The early Cold Warriors asserted that America's economy and security would be enhanced by creating viable economies in Europe and around the world.

In addition to the Marshall Plan, the Truman administration implemented "The Point Four Program" on June 24, 1949. This program promoted the economic development of the Far East, Latin America, and Africa through technical and administrative assistance—exporting "American skills and know-how rather than money."⁶⁸ Desiring mutual benefits for both the donor and recipient countries and not merely a propaganda effect, the Truman administration seriously pursued the fulfillment of the program's aims. In fact, the Truman and Eisenhower administrations implemented the economic aid programs during their respective terms so carefully that problems occurred over disputes among foreign service officers who argued about plans on how to best distribute the aid abroad and particularly on how to best benefit individuals in need. Historian Thomas Bailey noted: "On a dollar-for-dollar basis, none of the enormous expenditures of the years after World War II returned such rich dividends in good will and support for America's foreign policies as the Point Four scheme."⁶⁹

The Point Four Program's effectiveness stemmed from the recognition by its architects that these lesser developed countries had been "aroused" by their nationalism and the effects of industrialization. With increased expectations toward government and hopes of improvement in living standards, these nations needed a solid economic basis to satisfy their people. The risk of failure was costly. Truman noted that "[w]ithout such an economic base, they will be unable to meet the expectations which the modern world has aroused in their peoples. If they are frustrated and disappointed, they may turn to false doctrines which hold that the way of progress lies through tyranny."⁷⁰ In 1980, President Richard Nixon reflected realistically on the foreign aid during the Cold War and said: "From 1946 to 1976 the United States provided over \$180 billion in foreign aid for 137 nations around the world. Much of it was wasted, some of it did not advance our interests, but on the whole it was a massively expensive but worthwhile investment in our goal of building a peaceful and better world for ourselves and all people."⁷¹

However, despite the fact that these policies aimed at creating security and peace through the modest means of economic aid and international cooperation, opponents of America's foreign policy during the Cold War falsely accused the United States of having territorial ambitions and imperial designs. In November 1981, as the Cold War advanced into the beginning of its last decade, President Reagan addressed these criticisms and read before the National Press Club from a letter he had written to Soviet President Brezhnev while recovering in the hospital from an assassination attempt that came within inches of taking his life:

There is not only no evidence to support such a charge, there is solid evidence that the United States, when it could have dominated the world with no risk to itself, made no effort whatsoever to do so. When World War II ended, the United States had the only undamaged industrial power in the world. Our military might was at its peak, and we alone had the ultimate weapon with the unquestioned ability to deliver it anywhere in the world. If we had sought world domination then, who would have opposed us? But the United States followed a different course, one

unique in all the history of mankind. We used our power and wealth to rebuild the war-ravaged economies of the world, including those of the nations who had been our enemies. May I say there is absolutely no substance in the charges that the United State is guilty of imperialism or attempt to impose its will on other countries by use of force.⁷²

Thus many Americans who served in Vietnam find their “beginnings” in a deep patriotism that resulted from the success and values of our country, whether economic, political, or a combination of the two. Vietnam veterans and those who served in Vietnam often answer the question, “Why did you go to Vietnam?” by answering simply and yet profoundly, “My country asked me too.” That answer reflects not a shallow consideration of the politics of the Vietnam War but rather a deep appreciation for American ideals such as freedom and economic opportunity.⁷³ The generation that fought in the Vietnam War had experienced one of the greatest changes in world history, changes that brought prosperity at home and abroad, and security through resisting international aggression before it escalated into a global war. In 1983, when asked if they would return to fight in Vietnam again, 66 percent of the veterans said that they would—a statistic that even critics of the war have acknowledged.⁷⁴

The beginnings of the war in Vietnam can also be found in the great patriotic fervor that warmed the hearts of many *average* Americans during the economic boom of the Cold War era—a phenomenon that influenced not just those who served in the Vietnam War. The economic success of the United States was unparalleled in world history and generated a renewed popular sense of patriotism and appreciation for the American way of life. Students of history should understand the patriotism of the period not just in general terms but also in terms that underscore the individual and personal affections that many Americans felt toward their country. The threat of Communism in Vietnam challenged the very ideals on which this patriotism was based and

therefore provoked a strong reaction from the public, which arose to support the war and the notion of containing Communism.

The Cold War era, inclusive of the Vietnam War era, was far more than an epoch that witnessed anti-Communist extremism, racism, and “income inequality” in the United States. The decisive leadership of the Truman and Eisenhower administrations created a lasting global security arrangement that provided for and continues to provide for America’s safety and economic success—along with the success of other nations. Sure, not everyone has benefitted—and much still needs to be done.

But those who minimize the enormity and the extensiveness of the “economic miracle” of the period or the patriotic motives of those who served in Vietnam demonstrate a cynicism that blinds them to *the beginnings* of the war in Vietnam. Rather than acknowledging the success of the period, many Americans have become obsessed with the failure to attain perfection, fixated on problems rather than the solutions, and thus these pessimists disparage the efforts, the people, and the lessons of the Cold War.

The beginnings of the war in Vietnam are elusive in that no singular event can accurately define them in their entirety. While the deployment of U.S. Marines to Da Nang in 1965 indeed marked the beginning of the ground war for the United States, other points of time are also critical and far more fundamental. The desire of the United States to create a secure, safe, and free world during the Cold War was the chief reason why the United States became involved in Vietnam. The Communist challenge to international security and the quality of life among free and “friendly” nations provoked a reaction from the United States, which found that confronting Communist aggression in Vietnam was essential for maintaining that peace. The security arrangements created by the United States and other nations after World War II were so vital to

global security that they not only applied to Vietnam but remained intact beyond that conflict and survive to the present, serving as the basis for the present world order.

But these Cold War truths which fired the hearts of many of our American leaders burned like distant campfires in a foggy night for those who watched from afar, flickering and shapeless images in the eyes of many critics who isolated themselves from the efforts and the realities of the struggles that characterized the era and that divided the Free World from the Communist World. While choosing modern fictions which cater to the fancies of trendy and distracted intellectuals, many historians now have discarded the testimonies of those who led the United States through that dark hour.

At the very least the present generation of Americans owes these leaders, men like Harry Truman, Dwight Eisenhower, John F. Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Richard Nixon, and Ronald Reagan, a fair hearing before the court of public opinion. Indeed, those of us who now dine at the table of liberty owe a high measure of respect to those who so tirelessly prepared that table, served the dishes to us, and paid the tab without complaint.

Chapter 8

When Vietnam Veteran Melvyn Kloor Raised His Right Hand



**Vietnam Veteran MAJ (Ret) Melvyn Kloor at
Safwan Port of Entry, Iraq, January 2010**

Thursday, August 20, 2009 differed little from the days that proceeded so orderly that green Kansas summer. Major (Ret.) Melvyn Kloor arrived unassumingly at Ft. Leavenworth to be sworn in as a Department of Army civilian slated to undertake yet another tour of duty to a

war-ravaged land: this time called Iraq. Mel arrived that morning as usual-- early, and winning the foot race with the morning rays that burned off the light fog that met him as an old and faithful friend. There Mel stood, calmly positioned in the halls of our training center and wearing the natural smile that matured from over twenty years of military service in fights too covert to talk about openly.

The nervous bunch of civilians raising their hands with Mel barely knew the depth of his commitment, the words that would soon accompany our raised hands—and his veteran resolve that later would help some of us through a shared desert destiny.

Yes, the jumbled words of our oath stumbled awkwardly in the small room that served as the last chance for neophytes to exit an uncertain and perhaps lethal future. Those of us serving our first tour had looked to men like MAJ Kloor to punctuate America's conflicts in such a manner as to make them intelligible to studious eyes. That day was no different.

But when Mel Kloor raised his right hand few people on post or elsewhere understood that he did not have to be there. MAJ Kloor had served his country through decades in places like Laos, Latin America, Europe, and paid the price in suffering, pain, heart-wrenching trauma, and blood. Many of us called to duty for God and country cannot make such a claim. Many of us are early in our government and military service, placed in rear and not avant-garde posts, and smiled upon by outcomes far different from the scorching trials faced by this aged warrior.

Mel's sublime reason for undertaking another tour is simple: "After 9-11 I wanted to support our green-suitors (soldiers) and country." His retirement pay disqualifies critics who would think that his work is born of financial necessity. His loving wife's quiet suffering for her absent husband yet again shuts the mouth of cynics who would point to escapism as a motive to reach for another mission. No, Mel simply loves his country and had to serve again for another

tour, another time, and another moment to show his support for the young and brave who crossed his paths and felt the firm pat on a back from a seasoned fellow traveler.

Few in our class understood that when Mel Kloor raised his right hand it could have been physically painful, for he suffered from back pains, a jaw injury from hostile contacts in Laos, and the regular nagging presence of age that he dismissed with the same resolve that compelled his convictions. Nature and experiences of war both found his body a convenient place for making troubles but not a place to rest, for Mel's determination renewed daily to meet these challenges.

It was an inspiring Providence that yoked us together and sent us to Iraq on September 11 this past year. Not more than a week in Baghdad's dark night at Camp Liberty I found the value of Mel's presence. The first enemy rockets whistled through the skies, screeching with that bases' public address: "INCOMING! INCOMING! INCOMING!" The muffled explosion far away sounded too artificial to give me alarm. My incredulous senses could not comprehend what had just happened.

When I met Mel shortly thereafter he had determined already that "we must not allow the enemy to give pause to our lives and create fear in our minds." We walked together and found the recreational hall and watched one of the best hockey games of our lives, a match ended in a shoot-out with a television crowd on its feet. Yet it was in a rocket attack like that during our brief stay in Baghdad that a young soldier met his end, a casualty of a direct hit from "indirect fire." There were no cheering crowds to applaud his final performance.

Later that month Mel and I went on a mission to meet an Iraqi sheikh, a leader of the Sons of Iraq (SoI), and an Iraqi Police officer, who were all present in a little trailer they called "headquarters." The fact that these Iraqi leaders were the prime targets of enemy violence

occurring in abundance to their type needed no clarifications for all those who tried to relax in the steady hum of our up-armored vehicles deploying to meet these gentlemen. We all had heard and read the intelligence reports and knew the risks.

As our convoy meandered through a thousand opportunities to meet an insurgent, our security finally exited and took their positions. The short confusion that followed mixed up their plans. But Mel took pride in his reflexive experience and calmed their missteps with his advice to remain in the vehicles until the meeting started. Mel's timely advice at critical moments, often unnoticed by many, marked his ordinary actions, too many to detail and too mundane to make the headlines of *Stars and Stripes*. But it is this quiet leadership that allows fathers to return to their families, and husbands their wives.

We next walked the straightened path to that trailer, constrained by shoulder-to-shoulder nudges from young men and women strapped with M-16s, watching our backs as we met face to face with our hosts. But few people knew that when Mel Kloor raised his right hand on 20 August that he could switch from soldier to diplomat and talk with the best. Finding the right words was no small matter in these Key Leader Engagements. Mel used his skill as an anthropologist as well as Counter-Intelligence Officer to reach these alienated allies. In short but sweet victory, we ended our meeting with handshakes and understanding, finding progress the prize worth the risk.

That was truly one of Mel's best days. He helped build the bridges across distances formed from molten emotions and a gully of anger. He has much to take pride in from that day alone. That very tense day is now an event to remember and opportunity to hit back at the danger that lurked at our feet. Mel now makes that moment seem humorous with his light remarks, given for the purpose of processing the secondary and tertiary effects of stress.

I know Mel often crafted his humor to lighten the stress of our missions. I will never forget when during a city council meeting in Baghdad he slipped me a note that informing me that a tribal sheikh attending the meeting had compromised my security and was talking to others about my schedule and future plans (It is considered a violation of Operational Security to reveal one's future missions and plans to non-essential personnel). Mel timed his prank so cleverly knowing I took security matters very seriously.

As my temper rose over the breach of security and lit a fire in my eyes, Mel cut short my anger with his suppressed chuckle. There we sat muffling our laughter in that most serious meeting that he will not let me forget. That humorous scribbled note is enshrined in my home and my heart, as well as our experience.

When Mel Kloor raised his right hand to swear an oath to serve in Iraq, only his "Battle Buddies" knew his humor and rough exterior could not mask the character of a serious leader, a veteran of life as well as war. "Melissa, you are as dumb as a brick," Mel barked at young lady breaching security rules not yet put to heart. The tongue of this soldier could be as potent as his weapons of old but would not misfire when a sure shot was needed in crisis. For that skill I am indebted to my dear friend.

But the military system he served can easily become myopic, strained in sight by mass processing of people under the dim lights of expediency. Falling between the cracks of misjudgment Mel has not yet gained the full attention he deserves. Yet undaunted by the pains of this fate he undertook his missions in Iraq with energy and devotion—a point of pride for any soldier.

I had the good fortune of serving in Iraq with Mel during Operation Iraqi Freedom (2009-2010) and know his service like few others. The purpose of this chapter was to call attention to the exemplary service that marked this Vietnam veteran's service in Iraq while we were together there, but in a larger sense to make certain that such efforts of America's faithful are not overlooked or forgotten. Often it is said that there are many "unsung heroes" that fight and win America's wars. I have written of one who refuses the title of hero and remarks that "the real heroes were those who did not come back." I agree. But if I can sing the praises of another who has stood selflessly in the face of harm, at least one hero and Vietnam veteran has not gone unsung.

On 20 August 2009 when MAJ (Ret.) Melvyn Kloor raised his right hand to swear an oath to serve in Iraq, I did not know that very hand would be extended to me on so many occasions at war. Mel's outstretched hand of friendship made the difference for me on many days on our tour, and I trusted him with my life and well-being.



**MAJ (Ret) Melvyn Kloor (on right) and Social Scientist Dr. Martin
Scott Catino, Baghdad, Iraq, 2009**

NOTES

CHAPTER 1

¹ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), 333.

² N. Khac Huyen, *Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), xiii.

³ Bernard Fall in Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*. ed. Bernard Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), xi.

⁴ N. Khac Huyen, *Vision Accomplished?*, xiv.

⁵ Ibid., xi, xiv.

⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 205, 354.

⁷ Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh: A Man, A Nation, An Age, and A Cause*, 4th edition (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 1999), 50.

⁸ Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh; A Political Biography* (New York: Random House, 1968), 13. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970), 56.

⁹ Franklin Roosevelt, "Memorandum to Cordell Hull, January 24, 1944, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/fdrch.htm> (accessed June 25, 2007).

¹⁰ Bernard Fall in Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, ix. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 65-66. The later source noted that Ho had a "deep hatred for the colonialists." Ho Chi Minh also took on other aliases while in France and afterward.

¹¹ The Vietnamese nationalist accounts of French colonialism are particularly interesting and informative. For example, Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 715. Likewise, the Vietnamese Communist accounts provide some insights into the issue. For example, *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party, 1930-1970* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970), 5-11. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle, 1847-1945* (Hanoi, n.p., 1970), 39-44.

¹² Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), 141, 142.

¹³ George Donelson Moss. *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 2nd edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 11.

¹⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "Founding of the Communist Party of Indochina (February 1930)" reproduced in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*. (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1965), 34.

¹⁵ Ho Chi Minh's propaganda underscored the theme of economic exploitation by France, and later the United States. He used these propaganda themes until his death in 1969. For example, see Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 24-25, 31, 129, 144, 199, and 325.

¹⁶ General Chu Van Tan, "With Uncle Ho," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d.), 59. See also General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 27-28. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam Fundamental Problems* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1966), 37. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Independence and Peace for the Vietnamese People!* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1966), 11.

¹⁷ Jules Ferry, "On Colonial Expansion." (1880), <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1884ferry.html> (accessed June 25, 2007).

¹⁸ Maj. Gen. Oudone Sananikone, *The Royal Lao Army and U.S. Army Advice and Support* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 3. Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study* (United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Army, 1989), 30.

¹⁹ Nhu Tang Truong, *A Vietcong Memoir* (New York: Random House, 1985), 5.

²⁰ Maj. Gen. Oudone Sananikone, *The Royal Lao Army and U.S. Army Advice and Support*, 3.

²¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 3. Ho Chi Minh made the statement in December 1920 to the French Socialist Party.

²² Bernard Fall in Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, vi. [Emphasis is in the original.]

²³ Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 61.

²⁴ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York: Hyperion, 2000), 34.

²⁵ Cited in William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 37.

²⁶ Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 61-63.

²⁷ Ibid., 63.

²⁸ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 50-55.

²⁹ Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 15. Pham Van Dong used the term "new horizon" to refer to Ho Chi Minh's trip abroad, asserting that the experience was planned by him to broaden his understanding of the world.

³⁰ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 46. V. I. Lenin, "Draft Thesis on National and Colonial Questions" (5 June 1920) in *Collected Works*, second edition (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1965), vol 31, 144-151. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 15, 65-66.

³¹ "The 'Pittsburgh Proclamation.' Adopted by the Founding Congress of the American Federation of the International Working People's Association, October 14, 1883," <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/anarchist/1883/1014-iwpa-pittsburgh.pdf> (accessed July 26, 2007).

³² Winston S. Churchill, ed., *Never Give In! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches*. (New York: Hyperion books, 2003), 29.

³³ Wallace Dunn, "The 'Reds' in America From the Standpoint of the Department of Justice," <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/government/dept-justice/1920/0200-dunn-redsinamerica.pdf> (accessed July 26, 2007). Originally published in *The Review of Reviews*, Feb. 1920, pp. 161-166.

³⁴ Theodore Roosevelt, "State of the Union Message, December 3, 1901," <http://www.theodore-roosevelt.com/sotu1.html> (accessed June 25, 2007).

³⁵ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 50.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid., 53.

³⁸ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 53.

³⁹ Ibid., 55. Actually, this was Ho Chi Minh's second trip to France. He spent some time there prior to his trip to the United States.

⁴⁰ Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh*, 26.

⁴¹ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 78. This source acknowledged the fact that the organizations that Ho affiliated with were “militant” in nature and not merely political societies.

⁴² William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 58.

⁴³ Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend: A North Vietnamese Perspective on the War*. trans. Nguyen Ngoc Bich (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 10-11.

⁴⁴ Viet Nam Workers’ Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 16.

⁴⁵ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 123.

⁴⁶ Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 10. “Statement by General [George] C. Marshall” (January 7, 1947) in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., ed., *The Dynamics of World Power: A Documentary History of United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1973*. vol. IV. *The Far East* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973), 125.

⁴⁷ Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1964), 32.

⁴⁸ For instance, Gabriel Kolko attributed the rise of Ho Chi Minh’s Party in large part to its survival skills and the lack thereof in other political parties. Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985), 12-18.

⁴⁹ Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 10. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 128-130. Noted in this last citation is the fact that Ho Chi Minh advocated rights that he never implemented but in fact removed from Vietnam. Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 46. See Chapter Four.

⁵⁰ William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 59. Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study*, 40.

⁵¹ Or more often that position is implied in general studies of the Vietnam War. For example, George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 17.

⁵² William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 58-59.

⁵³ In fact, Ho Chi Minh’s party denounced these freedoms later as “petty freedom” and punished those who sympathized with these ideas. See Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 113.

⁵⁴ I am referring here to the well-known tactic of Communism which utilized “legal” and “quasi-legal” activities to promote Communism. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle, 1847-1945*, 109. The same tactic was also common among other radicals of the era. For instance, “The ‘Pittsburgh Proclamation.’ Adopted by the Founding Congress of the American Federation of the International Working People’s Association, October 14, 1883,” <http://www.marxists.org/history/usa/parties/anarchist/1883/1014-iwpa-pittsburgh.pdf> (accessed July 26, 2007). This document noted: “Fellow-workingmen, all we need for the achievement of this great end is ORGANIZATION and UNITY! There exists now no great obstacle to that unity. The work of peaceful education and revolutionary conspiracy well can and ought to run in parallel lines.”

⁵⁵ For example, see Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*.

⁵⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 5.

⁵⁷ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 290-291. Viet Nam Workers’ Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 15. Truong Chinh, *Forward Along the Path Chartered by K. Marx* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1969), 37.

⁵⁸ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” July 1947 in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds., *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World*. (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 157.

⁵⁹ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” July 1947 in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds., *The American Encounter*, 156.

⁶⁰ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 5.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁶² Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 15.

⁶³ Winston S. Churchill, ed., *Never Give In!*, 77.

⁶⁴ Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives*. trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 50.

⁶⁵ Martin McCauley, ed., *The Russian Revolution and the Soviet State, 1917-1921. Documents* (London: The Macmillan Company, Ltd., 1975), 188-189.

⁶⁶ Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen: The Tyrant and Those Who Killed for Him* (New York: Random House, 2004), 70.

⁶⁷ Cited in Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen*, 74.

⁶⁸ Ho Chi Minh admitted in his early years that the people of Vietnam held a negative perception of Communism. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 9.

⁶⁹ For example, Ngo Dinh Diem, "Letter of Diem to Kennedy, June 9, 1961," in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 106-110.

⁷⁰ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 216-217.

⁷¹ See Courtois, Stephane, Werth, Nicholas, Panne, Jean-Louis, et. al. *The Black Book on Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999).

⁷² Lev Kopelev, *The Education of a True Believer*. trans. Gary Kern (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1978), 117.

⁷³ For example, Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 35-36, 329.

⁷⁴ Lenin called for the destruction of these groups after they served their purpose and not just abandoning the alliance as some historians have suggested. For example, see William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*, 65. Lenin's references to terms like "struggle against" and "temporary alliance" have concrete examples in his own revolution, which used the middle class at first and then destroyed it later. See also Richard Pipes, ed., *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives*.

⁷⁵ V.I. Lenin, "Draft Thesis on National and Colonial Questions" 5 June 1920 in *Collected Works*, vol. 31, 144-151.

⁷⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 9.

⁷⁷ See also Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 36, 321.

⁷⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 36. While discussing his training in Moscow, Ho noted regarding class struggle and his instruction: "It teaches to the future vanguard militants the principles of class struggle, confused in the minds by race conflicts and patriarchal customs."

⁷⁹ Lenin, "Draft Thesis on National and Colonial Questions" 5 June 1920 *Collected Works*, vol. 31, 144-151. Lenin stated: "The urgency against the struggle against this evil, against the most deep-rooted petty-bourgeois prejudices, looms even larger with the mounting exigency of the task of converting the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., existing in a single country and incapable of determining world politics) into an international one. . . . Petty-bourgeois nationalism proclaims as internationalism the mere recognition of the equality of nations, and nothing more. Quite apart from the fact that this recognition is purely verbal, petty-

bourgeois national self-interest intact, whereas proletarian internationalism demands, first, that the interest of the proletarian struggle in any one country should be subordinated to the interests of the struggle on a world-wide scale. . . .”

⁸⁰ Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 15.

⁸¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 6. Ho stated at that time about his commitment to Communism: “But from then on, I also plunged into the debates and discussed with fervor.” Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 15-16. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker’s Party, 1930-1970*, 10.

⁸² Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 28.

⁸³ For example, Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 23, 24, 29, 35-36.

⁸⁴ V. I. Lenin, “Draft Thesis on National and Colonial Questions” (5 June 1920) in *Collected Works*. vol. 31, 144-151. Lenin called for more concrete information to support his notions on the subject of “Negroes in America.”

⁸⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 43-46.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 329. Tran Van Din in Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), xiv.

⁸⁷ Donald Rayfield, *Stalin and His Hangmen*, 372.

⁸⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 40.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 329.

⁹⁰ The point here is that Ho Chi Minh followed the Marxian concept of “materialism,” which rejected the belief that morality played an essential role in the determination of social and economic conditions.

⁹¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 26.

⁹² Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 6-7.

⁹³ Ibid., 20-21.

⁹⁴ “Comintern History (France) December 1920, French Socialist Party to Join the III International,” <http://www.marxists.org/history/international/comintern/sections/france/1920/psf-tours.htm> (accessed July 26, 2007).

⁹⁵ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party, 1930-1970*, 12, 14, 15. Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh*, 26.

⁹⁶ See Eduard Bernstein, *Evolutionary Socialism* (1899), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/index.htm> (accessed July 26, 2007).

⁹⁷ "The COMINTERN" in Martin McCauley, *The Russian Revolution and the Soviet State, 1917-1921. Documents* (London: the Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1975), 224.

⁹⁸ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party, 1930-1970*, 12, 14, 15, 17, 26, 44. Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 7-8. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 281.

⁹⁹ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 87.

¹⁰⁰ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 202, 291, 299. Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 10.

¹⁰¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 36. Ho remarked about that school: "Moreover, they [students] passionately long to acquire knowledge and to study. They are serious and full of enthusiasm. They are entirely different from the frequenters of the boulevards of the Latin Quarter, the Eastern students in Paris, Oxford, and Berlin. It can be said without exaggeration that under the roof of this University is the future of the colonial peoples."

¹⁰² Gabriel Kolko, *Anatomy of a War*, 26.

¹⁰³ National Intelligence Estimate, "Prospects for Soviet Control of Communist China" April 15, 1949, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007). Furthermore, loyalty was a major criterion for service and leadership in the Communist Party.

¹⁰⁴ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 80-81. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 41.

¹⁰⁵ Ho Chi Minh. *Prison Dairy* in David G. Marr, ed., *Reflections From Captivity* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978), 92.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid*, 77. The emphasis is not in the original.

¹⁰⁷ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 65. Pham Van Dong in Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 15. The Communist Party in Vietnam today likewise advocates this "steeling" process.

¹⁰⁸ Richard Nixon, *Six Crises* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1962), 281-282.

¹⁰⁹ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 10, 27. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 78, 109.

¹¹⁰ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-1995* (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 2000), 136-137. Luu noted on Soviet and Chinese aid during the Geneva Accords period (1955) that: "The USSR, China, and the fraternal countries helped us strengthen and improve the equipment of a number of enterprises, such as the Hon Gai Coal Mines, the Textile Mill of Nam Dinh, the Cement Factory and the Phosphate Factory of Hai Phong. They also helped us build anew a number of modernly equipped factories to produce tea, canned food, electricity, piled wood, matches, cigarettes, alcohol, soap, rubber as well as rice decortication mills, tin mines, and the apatite mines. In particular, the USSR helped us construct a medium-size machine building factory, China helped us restore the Yen Vien-Dong Dang railway line, creating conditions for international transport to all socialist countries." General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 41.

¹¹¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 347-348.

CHAPTER 2

¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Prison Dairy* in Marr, David G. ed., *Reflections From Captivity*. (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978), 81.

² Pham Van Dong noted also that Ho wanted to bring Communism to all of East Asia. Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh: A Man, A Nation, An Age, and A Cause*, 4th edition (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 1999), 21-22, 47. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-1995* (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 2000), 137.

³ Pham Van Dong, Van. *Ho Chi Minh*, 51. Pham Van Dong noted: "Throughout his life, Ho Chi Minh followed one road and one goal. Nevertheless, he directed strategy and tactics in a dynamic and versatile way, without sticking to rigid principles and dogmas. . . . With a special political sensitivity, Ho Chi Minh correctly appraised the turning point, making very clearsighted [sic] and clever decisions, now compromising to preserve and consolidate his forces, now resolutely turning to the attack with well-prepared forces in decisive battles."

⁴ Ho Chi Minh died in 1969 and did not live to see the victory of his Vietnamese Communists in 1975.

⁵ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party, 1930-1970* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970), 22. Ho Chi Minh, *Against U.S. Aggression For National Salvation* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1967), 16. During these primary building years, or the "survival stage" of protracted war, the Vietnamese Communists concentrated on organization, propaganda, and guerrilla warfare, leaving conventional warfare for the later stages of development. Therefore, military supplies imported from abroad were less important

compared to later years. Nevertheless, the Chinese Communists provided much aid and shelter for Ho's revolution—a point discussed later in the chapter. Moreover, reliance on local supplies—stealing, taxing, and requisitioning—was a practice used to create self sufficiency, a coveted Communist characteristic for organization building in the initial stages.

⁶ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 81.

⁷ Tran Van Dinh, in Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan First Secretary, Central Committee Vietnam Workers' Party*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), xv.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 78. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970), 74-76. Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism: A Case History of North Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1964), 43.

¹⁰ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 80-81. Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 43.

¹¹ Quoted in Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and The NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (New York: Ballentine Books, 1992), 34-35.

¹² General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in *Mountain Regions and National Minorities* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d.), 45-46.

¹³ General Chu Van Tan, "With Uncle Ho," in *Mountain Regions and National Minorities* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d.), 62-66.

¹⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "Founding of the Communist Party of Indochina (February 1930)" in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1965), 35. Ho Chi Minh, "An Open Letter to M. Leon Archimbaud" in *Le Paria* January 15, 1923 in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*. ed. Bernard Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 19.

¹⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 130.

¹⁶ General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 46. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 100-101.

¹⁷ Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 50. General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 46. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 100-101.

¹⁸ General Chu Van Tan, *Reminiscences on the Army for National Salvation: Memoir of General Chu Van Tan*. trans. Mai Elliott (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1974), 51.

¹⁹ Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 43.

²⁰ N. Khac Huyen, *Vision Accomplished? The Enigma of Ho Chi Minh* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1971), 27. During this time Ho betrayed the famous Vietnamese nationalist Phan Boi Chau for 150,000 Indochinese piasters. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 10.

²¹ Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 43. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 22.

²² General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 29.

²³ General Chu Van Tan, "With Uncle Ho," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 61. See also General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 41. Giap noted that from 1926-1927 the student movement in Hue had become associated with international Communism: "Following the quit-school movement staged by the student in Hue in 1927, I was dismissed from school and had to go to my native village. At that time, the student movement in Hue also maintained contacts with the revolutionary organizations abroad."

²⁴ Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 100-101.

²⁵ Ho Chi Minh, like Mao Zedong, used this tactic during the early revolutionary stages. The secrecy concealed not only the international connection but also the Communist nature of the movement. National Intelligence Estimates (NIE), "Prospects for Soviet Control of Communist China" (April 15, 1949), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007).

²⁶ N. Khac Huyen, *Vision Accomplished?* 29-30. See also Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 82. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 91.

²⁷ See Barbara Leitch LePoer, ed., *Thailand: A Country Study* (Washington: Federal Research Division, 1987). This source is available online, [http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+th0000\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+th0000)) (accessed May 21, 2007).

²⁸ Pham Van Dong, Van. *Ho Chi Minh*, 51. General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 32-38. Dan Van Song, "A Historical View of the Vietnamese Nationalist Cause," in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*, 139. The author, who was a South Vietnamese Senator during the war, discussed the Communist Vietnamese ability to seize causes such as the nationalist revolt during World War II. Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966).

²⁹ Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 92, 100-101.

³⁰ Dan Van Song, "A Historical View of the Vietnamese Nationalist Cause," in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese*, 139.

³¹ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 27-28. General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 36. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 50-68. Giap noted the fact that Ho was very careful in his organizational work during World War II, a master at pacing his activities.

³² Clive J. Christie, ed., *Southeast Asia in the Twentieth Century: A Reader* (New York and London: I.B. Tauris and Company, Ltd., 1998), 77.

³³ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 130.

³⁴ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 126. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 208.

³⁵ Pham Van Dong, Van. *Ho Chi Minh*, 30. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 109. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 21-22.

³⁶ For example, Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 163. Basic Communist ideology upheld the notion that revolutionaries must not await the fall of capitalism but strive to realize that outcome.

³⁷ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 566.

³⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 130.

³⁹ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 20, 44, 47. Le Duan, *Some Questions Concerning The International Tasks of Our Party: Speech at the Ninth Plenum of the Third Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party* (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1964),

161. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 65. Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend: A North Vietnamese Perspective on the War*. trans. Nguyen Ngoc Bich (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 7-8. General Chu Van Tan, *Reminiscences on the Army for National Salvation*, 77. *Heroes and Heroines of Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam* (South Vietnam: Liberation Editions, 1965), 8. Tran Van Dinh in Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 100. The last author noted: "The greatest achievement of the North's socialist revolution has been the elimination of oppression and exploitation, the liquidation of the exploiting classes as such, and the replacement of small-scale and scattered production by co-operation."

⁴⁰ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 566.

⁴¹ Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 112-113. Hoang Van Chi, "Land Reform" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and Its Aftermath In the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians* (New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1985), 46.

⁴² Marvin Gettleman, ed. *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 56. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *A Century of National Struggle*, 123. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1966), 41-42.

⁴³ Marvin Gettleman, ed. *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 57.

⁴⁴ Ho Chi Minh returned to Vietnam to oversee directly the Vietminh. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 32-34. Mai Thi Tu, "A Century of Anti-Colonial Struggle (1859-1954)" in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *South Viet Nam: From the NFL to the Provisional Revolutionary Government*, 224-234. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 39-68. The term *Vietminh* is a contraction of "Vietnam Doc Lap Dong Minh" (League for Vietnamese Independence).

⁴⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 200. Ho Chi Minh, *Against U.S. Aggression For National Salvation*, 19.

⁴⁶ Pham Van Dong, Van. *Ho Chi Minh*, 26.

⁴⁷ General Chu Van Tan, *Reminiscences on the Army for National Salvation*, 49. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 41.

⁴⁸ General Le Quang Ba, "Reminiscences of Underground Revolutionary Work," in Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 38-40. General Chu Van Tan, *Reminiscences on the Army for National Salvation*, 46-47.

⁴⁹ Examples of guerrilla warfare accounts by the Communist Vietnamese include Lieutenant General Hoang Van Thai, *Some Aspects of Guerrilla Warfare in Vietnam* (Hanoi: Foreign

Language Publishing House, 1965). "Cuu Long on New Developments in the Guerrilla War in South Vietnam" (Published in *Quan Doi Nhan Dan* [Hanoi], November 29, 1966, and broadcast by Liberation Radio to South Vietnam, 0100 GMT, November 13, 1966) in *Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. Visions of Victory: Selected Vietnamese Communist Military Writings, 1964-1968* (Hoover Institution Publications, 1969), 101-112. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*.

⁵⁰ Penn Nouth, "Invitation to a Sideshow," in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 66-69. Brig. Gen. Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 9. Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1970).

⁵¹ For example, Brig. Gen. Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle*, 16-19, 196. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*. Lt. Gen. Sak Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 1-17. General Cao Van Vien and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections on the Vietnam War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 136-163. Penn Nouth, "Invitation to a Sideshow," in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 66-69.

⁵² General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 57-58. Viet Nam Workers' Party, *Our President Ho Chi Minh*, 93-94. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 14-15, 46.

⁵³ General Cao Van Vien and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen *Reflections on the Vietnam War*, 136. These two Generals noted in their book: "Of historical interest, it is also worth noting that the building of a Communist underground infrastructure—the preparatory phase—had begun as early as the 1930s and developed during the 1946-1954 First Indochina War under the Viet Minh movement. This organization continued its underground existence in South Vietnam after the 1954 Geneva Accords, and along with guerrillas, had re-emerged and rapidly developed since 1959."

⁵⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal for General Insurrection," (August 16, 1945) *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 141. Also, Ho Chi Minh, "Declaration of Independence of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam" (September 2, 1945) *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 142-145.

⁵⁵ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 "Background to the Crisis, 1940-50," (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html>. John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*, 5. President Harry Truman, underscoring Dean Acheson's concerns on Southeast Asia and Communism, noted in his memoirs that his administration had been concerned about events in Indochina for a

long time. Truman, Harry S. *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 519.

⁵⁶ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 80.

⁵⁷ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 567.

⁵⁸ Hoang Van Chi, "Land Reform" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 46. Mao Zedong, "Report On An Investigation of the Peasant Movement in Hunan" March 1927, http://www.marxists.org/reference/archives/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv-1_2.htm#s5 (accessed October 19, 2007). Although Mao denied that innocent people were often hurt in the peasant revolts under his leadership, his point was that the most important issue was overthrowing the enemy, not the nature and excessive level of violence of the revolution.

⁵⁹ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 566. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 189, 214. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 44, 47. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 83. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 23-27. These South Vietnamese generals provide excellent examples and commentary on the subject.

⁶⁰ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 567.

⁶¹ Mrs. Le Thi Anh, "Revolution" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 36. Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 566.

⁶² Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 26.

⁶³ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 85. Giap noted: "The liquidation of the reactionaries of the Vietnam Quoc Dan Dang was crowned with success, and we were able to liberate all the areas which had fallen into their hands."

⁶⁴ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 189, 214.

⁶⁵ Rufus Phillips, "Pacification" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 54.

⁶⁶ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 17.

⁶⁷ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 567.

⁶⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 189, 149.

⁶⁹ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 567-568.

⁷⁰ Hoang Van Chi, "Land Reform" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 46. See also Hoang Van Chi, *From Colonialism to Communism*, 92.

⁷¹ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 "Background to the Crisis, 1940-50," (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html>.

⁷² Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 165. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 50.

⁷³ Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 31.

⁷⁴ Ho Chi Minh, "Message to the Vietnamese People, the French People, and the Peoples of the Allied Nations" (December 21, 1946) in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 174.

⁷⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 214. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 50.

⁷⁶ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 "Background to the Crisis, 1940-50," (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html>.

⁷⁷ For example, Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 136.

⁷⁸ Neil Sheehan, Hedrick Smith, et. al., *The Pentagon Papers* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), 26.

⁷⁹ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 "Background to the Crisis, 1940-50," (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html>. In February 1947, the United States Ambassador in Paris noted to the French Premier Ramadier: "On other hand we do not lose sight fact that Ho Chi Minh has direct Communist connections and it should be obvious that we are not interested in seeing colonial empire administrations supplanted by philosophy and political organizations emanating from and controlled by Kremlin. . . ."

⁸⁰ Stephane Courtois, Nicholas Werth, et. al., *The Black Book on Communism*, 568. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 207-208. Ho noted in 1951 regarding Mao's revolution: "Owing to geographical, historical, economic, and cultural conditions, the Chinese Revolution exerted a great influence on the Viet-Nameese revolution, which had to learn and indeed has learned many experiences from it."

⁸¹ Hoang Van Chi, "Land Reform" in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 45-46.

⁸² Pham Van Dong, Van. *Ho Chi Minh*, 44.

⁸³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change: 1953-1956* (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), 331-333. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 380. National Intelligence Council, "The Breakup of the Colonial Empires and Its Implications for US Security (3 September 1948) in *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, PA: Government Printing Office, 2005), 7-8. National Intelligence Council, "Memo Critical Developments in French Policy Toward Indochina (10 January 1952) in *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 38.

⁸⁴ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 291.

⁸⁵ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change*, 333. "Speech by Premier Laniel Before the National Assembly, March 5, 1954," in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 495-497. NIC, "Prospects for the Defense of Indochina Against A Chinese Communist Invasion (7 September 1950)" in *Estimative Products*, 1. "Probable Developments in Indochina Through Mid-1952 (3 March 1952)," in *Estimative Products*, 1-2.

⁸⁶ Lieutenant-General Hoang Van Thai, *Some Aspects of Guerrilla Warfare in Vietnam*, 25. See also *Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam*.

⁸⁷ *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 61.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 60-61. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change*, 331-333. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 88. National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954," 4 June 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Ho Chi Minh, *Against U.S. Aggression For National Salvation*, 20.

⁸⁹ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 90. National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954," 4 June 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). "Indochina-United States Emergency Aid to Laos and Thailand in the Face of Viet Minh Aggression: Statement by the Secretary of State at a News Conference, May 9, 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Indochina-United States Support of Laos Against the Viet Minh Invasion: Statement by the Department of State, April 17, 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁹⁰ General Chu Van Tan, "With Uncle Ho," in *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*, 80. Tran Dinh Tho, *The Cambodian Incursion* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979). 18

⁹¹ "Mao Zedong and Ho Chi Minh: Changsha (Hunan), 16 May 1965," in *Cold War International History Project Virtual Archive* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)).

Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979), 9.

⁹² Lt. Gen. Sak Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse*, 2. Penn Nouth, "Invitation to a Sideshow," in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 66-69.

⁹³ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 100-101. Brig. Gen. Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle*, 19. *An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party*, 68.

⁹⁴ John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 20.

⁹⁵ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*. Luu made asserted this point as a central feature of his diplomatic study of the war. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 372-373. *Political Programme of the South Viet Nam National Front for Liberation* (Gia Phon Publishing House South Vietnam, 1967), 12.

⁹⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 372-3. Penn Nouth, "Invitation to a Sideshow," in Al Santoli, ed., *To Bear Any Burden*, 66-69. This advocacy of regional Communist movements was also evident at the Geneva Conference. "Excerpts from the First Plenary Session, the Geneva Conference Indochina Phase, 8 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁹⁷ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 345.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 207, 345-348, 388-389. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 139.

⁹⁹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 349, 361, 377.

¹⁰⁰ NIE, "Probable Developments in China (June 16, 1949)," <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007). George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 49. National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954," 4 June 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). The last document noted the PRC's military activities in northern Vietnam. US, National Security Council, NSC 5405, 'United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia,' 16 January 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). US, National Security Council, Action No. 1074-a, on Possible Intervention in Indochina, 5 April 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹⁰¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 388. The buildup of Chinese forces along its southern border, in addition to the PRC's continued development of the logistics of this area, created a threat scenario recognized by both French and U.S. authorities. NIC, "French Problems in Indochina (4 September 1951)," in *Estimative Products*, 1.

¹⁰² The defense of Europe from Communist aggression was the chief priority among presidential policies regarding the era of containment of international Communism. United States policy regarding Vietnam entailed a careful consideration of limiting the war in extent in order to concentrate a sufficient amount of United States resources on the preservation of Europe. The Europe first strategy was therefore central to the policy of containment. See Chapter One. Also, Memorandum from Arthur Radford, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Defense of Southeast Asia in the Event of Loss of Indochina to the Communists," 21 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹⁰³ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 383.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 355. Pham Van Dong, *Ho Chi Minh*, 48.

¹⁰⁵ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 278.

¹⁰⁶ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 139.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: 1961* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ Major Harry D. Bloomer, "An Analysis of the French Defeat At Dien Bien Phu,"; Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff on the Navarre Concept for Operations in Indochina, 28 August 1953; Memorandum for the National Security Council on Further US Support for France and the Associated States of Indochina, 5 August 1953; Remarks Made by Major General Thomas J.H. Trapanall, Jr., Former Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, 3 May 1954; <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹¹⁰ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change*, 356.

¹¹¹ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 91-92.

¹¹² NIC, "Memo Critical Developments in French Policy Toward Indochina, 10 January 1952," *Estimative Products*, 38. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years*, 350. National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

Memorandum from the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the President's Special Committee on Indochina, "Discussions with General Paul Ely, 29 March 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹¹³ However, many Americans felt a deep sorrow for the loss of life among the French soldiers, who fought bravely at Dien Bien Phu and throughout the Franco-Vietminh War. Many American military and political leaders praised the bravery of the French Union forces at Dien Bien Phu. For example, "Indochina-Midway in the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, May 7, 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹¹⁴ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 54-55. Lt. Gen. Sak Sutsakhan, *The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 1-2.

¹¹⁵ US, National Security Council, Action No. 1074-a, "On Possible Intervention in Indochina, 5 April 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

CHAPTER 3

¹ Zhou Enlai, "Telegram, [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai to [Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP)] Mao Zedong and Others, Regarding the Situation at the Thirteenth Plenary Session" 6 June 1954 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007).

² Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-1995* (Hanoi: The Gioi Publishers, 2000), 108, 118.

³ Memorandum from Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Indochina-Plans for the Geneva Conference on Korea and Indochina: "Quadripartite Communique of the Berlin Conference, February 18, 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁴ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 111-112. Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 130.

⁵ Chou En-Lai, "Speech by Premier Chou En-Lai to the Geneva Conference, May 12, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 584. He noted: "In this

connection, special reference should be made to the peace policy of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. The Government of the Soviet Union and the Soviet people have insisted all along on a peaceful settlement of the Indo-China question, and have consistently stood for the national rights of the Indo-China peoples at various international conferences.”

⁶ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 107. Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*. trans. Strobe Talbot (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1970), 392-394. After Joseph Stalin’s death, Khrushchev addressed this subject of East-West relations at the Geneva conference held in 1955, which is a different conference from the subject of this chapter.

⁷ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 86-88. Central Intelligence Agency, “The Balance of Power, August 1948 to October 1950,” 5 August 1953, p. 3, (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). National Intelligence Estimate-91, “Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁸ John Foster Dulles, “Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954,” <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (accessed August 1, 2006).

⁹ Dwight Eisenhower, “Address by President Eisenhower Before the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 21, 1956,” Public Papers of the President, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/ps20.htm> (accessed August 1, 2006).

¹⁰ Central Intelligence Agency, “NIE 10-2-54: Communist Courses of Action in Asia Through Mid-1955, 15 March 1954” in *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Government Printing Office, 2005), 4-10. *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 “Background to the Crisis, 1940-50,” (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html> (June 1, 2007). “Telegram, [Ambassador to the Soviet Union and Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)] Zhang Wentian to [Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of the PRC] Li Kenong, Concerning the Soviet suggestion on propaganda work at Geneva,” April 6, 1954 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007). Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). National Intelligence Estimate-91, “Probable Developments in

Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹¹ The aim of dispersing American power and military forces was a central notion to Communist strategy throughout the Cold War and thus a common theme in many Soviet and Chinese Communist writings. See “NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security (April 14, 1950),” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nsc-68/nsc68-1.htm>. U.S. strategists avoided such an outcome. *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 “Background to the Crisis, 1940-50,” (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html> (August 1, 2007). Memorandum from Arthur Radford, Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff, “Defense of Southeast Asia in the Event of Loss of Indochina to the Communists, 21 May 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). US, National Security Council, NSC 5405, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia, 16 January 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹² David J. Dallin, *Soviet Foreign Policy After Stalin* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott Company, 1961), 153.

¹³ Central Intelligence Agency, “Indecision and Stress, 21 August 1953” (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), pp.4-23, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹⁴ Ibid. Central Intelligence Agency, “The Balance of Power, August 1948 to October 1950,” 5 August 1953 (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), p.6, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). However, U.S. policymakers were aware of the fact that the Soviets were increasing rapidly their nuclear arms capacity and thus closing the gap between their capabilities and that of the United States. For example, Memorandum from Brigadier General C.H. Bonesteel, III to Secretary of Defense, “Future US Action Regarding Indochina, 9 May 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹⁵ Central Intelligence Agency, “Memo: Current Outlook in Indochina, 9 February 1954,” in *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 5. “Minutes, [Director of the Staff Office of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs] Wang Bingnan’s Meeting with [President of the International Federation on Human Rights Joseph] Paul-Boncour 30 May 1954” (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007). Remarks Made by Major General Thomas J.H. Trapnall, Jr.,

Former Chief of the Military Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, 3 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹⁶ “Minutes, Conversation between [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai and [British Foreign Secretary] Anthony Eden 14 May 1954”(Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007). Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*, 130.

¹⁷ Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*, 136.

¹⁸ Zhou Enlai was so offended at Dulles’ rebuff that the Chinese foreign minister mentioned the incident to Henry Kissinger in 1971 nearly twenty years later during the famous “secret talks” between the United States and China during the Nixon administration. Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1999), 157.

¹⁹ John Foster Dulles, “Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954.” (Made before the Overseas Press Club, New York), <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (accessed August 1, 2006). See also Memorandum from Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

²⁰ Mao Zedong in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*, 73. On November 18, 1957 Mao asserted: “U.S. imperialism has not yet fallen and it has the atom bomb. I believe it will also fall. It is also a paper tiger. . . . I am of the opinion that the international situation as now reached a new turning point. There are two winds in the world today: the East wind and the West wind. There is a Chinese saying: ‘Either the East wind prevails over the West wind or the West wind prevails over the East wind.’ I think the characteristic of the situation today is the East wind prevailing over the West wind. That is to say, the socialist forces are overwhelmingly superior to the imperialist forces.” NIE, “ORE 45-49/Probable Developments in China” June 16, 1949, <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007).

²¹ John Foster Dulles, “Address by Secretary Dulles on United States Policy Toward Communist China, June 28, 1957” in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., ed., *The Dynamics of World Power: A Documentary History of United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1973*. vol. IV. *The Far East* (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973), 221.

²² Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 107. Memorandum from Arthur Radford for the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the President’s Special Committee on Indochina, “Discussions

with General Paul Ely, 29 March 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*, 138.

²³ Telegram from Ambassador Dillon in Paris to Secretary of State Dulles on French-Chinese Talks, 24 June 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

²⁴ Nikita Khrushchev, *Khrushchev Remembers*, 341-345. George Paloczi-Horvath, *Khrushchev: The Making of a Dictator* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 146-166.

²⁵ Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles to the US Delegation in Geneva, 7 June 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

²⁶ Ho Chi Minh, “Report By Ho Chi Minh to the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, July 15, 1954” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 633-637.

²⁷ “Conversation between Mao Zedong and Pham Van Dong: Beijing, 17 November 1968.” *Cold War International History Project Virtual Archive*. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034CD31-96B6-175C-94B8985ED02AB324&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034CD31-96B6-175C-94B8985ED02AB324&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (August 1, 2007).

²⁸ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975*. trans. Merle L. Pribbenow (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 436. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 100.

²⁹ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 4. Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles to Geneva on Status of Conference Issues, 6 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³⁰ Donald Lancaster, “Power Politics At the Geneva Conference 1954” in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1965), 127. Bedell Smith, “Speech by Smith to the Geneva Conference, May 10, 1954” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 580.

³¹ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 “Background to the Crisis, 1940-50,” (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html> (June 1, 2007). Telegram from Secretary Dulles to the Paris Delegation, 14 June 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Telegram

from Secretary Dulles to the US Delegation in Geneva, 7 June 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³² The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 438.

³³ The case of the independence of the Philippines is well known to many. Perhaps as important was the role of the United States in the independence of Indonesia. See Arthur Schlesinger Jr.'s editorial comments in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., ed., *The Dynamics of World Power: A Documentary History of United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1973*, 677. Zhou Enlai, "Telegram, [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai to [Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP)] Mao Zedong and Others, Requesting Instructions on the Korean Issue and Regarding the Situation at the Fourth Plenary Session on the Indochina Issue 15 May 1954" (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007).

³⁴ John Foster Dulles, "Address to the Nation By Dulles, May 7, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 556. John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (August 1, 2007).

³⁵ Memorandum of a Presidential Discussion on the Matter of Sending US Forces to Indochina, 7 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Memorandum from Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³⁶ Excerpts from the First Plenary Session, the Geneva Conference, Indochina Phase, 8 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³⁷ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 112. Excerpts From the First Plenary Session, the Geneva Conference of Indochina Phase, 8 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³⁸ Pham Van Dong, "Speech by D.R.V. Premier Pham Van Dong to the Geneva Conference, May 8, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 565.

³⁹ Phoui Sananikone, "Speech by the Head of the Laotian Delegation Phoui Sananikone, to the Geneva Conference, May 8, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation*

of *Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 564. However, Sananikone was willing to allow the Communists to participate in the government of Laos under the condition that it submitted to the electoral and legal practices. Zhou Enlai, “Telegram, [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai to [Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP)] Mao Zedong and Others, Regarding the Situation of the Meeting with [Laotian Interior and Foreign Minister Phoui] Sananikone” 23 June 1954, (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007).

⁴⁰ Ibid., 564.

⁴¹ Phoui Sananikone, “Speech by the Head of the Laotian Delegation Phoui Sananikone, to the Geneva Conference, May 8, 1954” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions* vol. 1, 564.

⁴² Bao Dai appointed Diem as Prime Minister on June 18, 1954 during the Geneva conference. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 120. Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 16-19.

⁴³ Memorandum from Arthur Radford for the Joint Chiefs of Staff for the President’s Special Commission on Indochina, “Discussions with General Paul Ely, 9 March 1954”; Telegram From Secretary of State Dulles to the Paris Delegation, 14 June 1954; Indochina-The Threat of Direct Chinese Communist Intervetion in Indochina: Address by the Secretary of State, June 11, 1954; <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 16-19.

⁴⁴ Lam Quang Thi, *Twenty-Five Year Century: A South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War to the Fall of Saigon* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 72.

⁴⁵ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American’s Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 150.

⁴⁶ Memorandum From the Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). US, National Security Council NSC 5405, “United States Objectives and Courses of Action With Respect to Southeast Asia, 16 January 1954,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁴⁷ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change: 1953-1956* (Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963), 348.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ "The Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam (Geneva Accord)," (July 20, 1954) in Fred L. Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1648-1967*. vol IV (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1967), 268-297.

⁵⁰ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. second edition (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1986), 39.

⁵¹ See Chapter Two.

⁵² Vietnamese Communist strategy, taking its lead from Leninist thought, demanded an offensive rather than defensive political posture. Hanoi's policy was so aggressive that even "waiting" was condemned as an ideological error in methods. See Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan First Secretary, Central Committee Vietnam Workers Party*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), 22, 26, 27.

⁵³ Ho Chi Minh, "Report By Ho Chi Minh to the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, July 15, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 635.

⁵⁴ "Minutes, [Director of the Staff Office of the People's Republic of China (PRC) Ministry of Foreign Affairs] Wang Bingnan's Meeting with [French Ambassador to Switzerland Jean] Chauvel and [Counselor to the French delegation, Colonel Jacques] Guillermez 6 June 1954" (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007).

⁵⁵ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 118-119.

⁵⁶ Ho Chi Minh, "Report By Ho Chi Minh to the 6th Plenum of the Party Central Committee, July 15, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 633-637.

⁵⁷ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 370.

⁵⁸ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 428.

⁵⁹ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 370.

⁶⁰ George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" (July 1947) in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds., *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 161.

⁶¹ John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (August 1, 2007). National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference, 12 March 1954," National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶² National Intelligence Estimate-91, "Probable Developments in Indochina through 1954, 4 June 1953"; Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference, 12 May 1954"; Memorandum of a Presidential Discussion on the Matter of Sending US Forces to Indochina, 7 May 1954"; Memorandum for the President's Special Committee, "Military Implications of the US Position on Indochina in Geneva, March 1954"; Memorandum from Brigadier General C.H. Bonesteel III to the Secretary of Defense, "Future US Action Regarding Indochina, 9 May 1954"; <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶³ Central Intelligence Agency, "Memo: Probable Communist Strategy and Tactics at Geneva, 19 April 1954" in *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 1-7. Central Intelligence Agency, "NIE 63-5-54 On the Post-Geneva Outlook in Indochina, August 3, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 657-662.

⁶⁴ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change*, 357. Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by the Joint Chiefs of Staff, "Preparation of Department of Defense Views Regarding Negotiations on Indochina for the Forthcoming Geneva Conference, 12 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶⁵ Donald Lancaster, "Power Politics At the Geneva Convention 1954," in Marvin Gettleman, Marvin, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 120. Memorandum From Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Report by Secretary of State Dulles on Geneva and Indochina, NSC 195th Meeting, 6 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Telegram From Secretary of State Dulles to Dillon and Aldrich on Conversations with the

French, 3 April 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶⁶ John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (August 1, 2007).

⁶⁷ For example, Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*. (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 202.

⁶⁸ Memorandum From Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954; Telegram From Secretary of State Dulles to American Delegation in Geneva, 24 June 1954; <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶⁹ United States Department of State, "Memorandum of Conversation," (February 11, 1958) *Foreign Relations of the United States*. vol. X, 1958-60: *E. Europe Region; Soviet Union; Cyprus* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1993), <http://dosfan.lib.uic.edu/ERC/frus/frus58-60x1/07soviet1.html> (accessed June 1, 2007).

⁷⁰ John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (accessed August 1, 2007).

⁷¹ John Foster Dulles, "Press Conference Statement by Dulles, May 11, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 582. President Truman likewise warned of this tactic used by Communist diplomacy. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 421.

⁷² Dwight D. Eisenhower, *The White House Years Mandate for Change*, 357.

⁷³ John Foster Dulles, "Address to the Nation By Dulles, May 7, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 552. Dulles noted: "I have been out of the United States during much of the last 6 months to attend the Bermuda Conference, the Berlin Conference, then Caracas Conference, and two NATO Council meeting in Paris. These meetings strengthen the links with our allies and enable us to present the position of the United States to others."

⁷⁴ John Foster Dulles, "Press Conference Statement by Dulles, May 11, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 583. Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles on Conversations with Anthony Eden about Indochina, 25 April 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁷⁵ Office of Joint History Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *History of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: The Joint Chiefs of Staff and The First Indochina War, 1947-1954* (Washington, D.C., 2004), 177. Zhou Enlai, "Preliminary Opinions on the Assessment of and Preparation for the Geneva Conference," Prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (drafted by [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai) and approved in principle at a meeting of the CCP [Chinese Communist Party] Central Secretariat (excerpt)" 2 March 1954 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (accessed October 19, 2007). Report by Secretary of State Dulles on Geneva and Indochina, NSC 195th Meeting, 6 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁷⁶ John Foster Dulles, "Letter from Dulles to Mendes-France, July 10, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 628.

⁷⁷ For example, Telegram from Secretary of State Dulles on Conversation with Anthony Eden about Indochina, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Anthony Eden, *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*, 120-121.

⁷⁸ John Foster Dulles, "Telegram From Dulles to the State Department, April 29, 1954 in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 545.

⁷⁹ Zhou Enlai, "Telegram, [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai to [Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP)] Mao Zedong and others, Regarding the Seventh Plenary Session" 11 June 1954 (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)) (Accessed October 19, 2007). Zhou Enlai, "Telegram, [Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China (PRC)] Zhou Enlai to [Chairman of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CC CCP)] Mao Zedong and Others, Regarding the Situation of the Meeting with [Laotian Interior and Foreign Minister Phoui] Sananikone" 23 June 1954."

⁸⁰ "Proposal by the Cambodian Delegation to the Geneva Conference, June 8, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 606.

⁸¹ Bedell Smith, "Speech by Smith to the Geneva Conference, May 10, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 580.

⁸² Throughout the 1960s the Communist Vietnamese effectively kept Washington guessing whether Hanoi's primary objective for Laos was conquest or logistical support. President Nixon correctly estimated that Hanoi had resolved to use Laos mainly for logistical purposes and then later control it if South Vietnam was defeated. In 1975, after North Vietnam captured the South, Hanoi took control of Laos rapidly and with little difficulty. Richard Nixon, "Statement by President Nixon on the Scope of United States Involvement in Laos." (March 6, 1970), in Arthur Schlesinger Jr., ed., *The Dynamics of World Power*. vol. IV. *The Far East*, 618. Telegram From Ambassador Dillon to Secretary of State Dulles, 14 June 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁸³ Telegram From Secretary of State Dulles to Dillon and Aldrich on Conversations with the French, 3 April 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁸⁴ "Proposal by the Delegation of the State of Viet-Nam to the Geneva Conference, July 19, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 641.

⁸⁵ *The Pentagon Papers* (Gravel edition) vol. 1 "Background to the Crisis, 1940-50," (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), chapter 1, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/pentagon/pent1.html> (June 1, 2007).

⁸⁶ Ngo Dinh Diem, "Broadcast declaration by President Diem on the Geneva Agreement and Free Elections, July 16, 1955" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 707.

⁸⁷ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition. (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 80-81.

⁸⁸ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 42-43.

⁸⁹ Telegram From Secretary of State Dulles to Geneva on Status of Conference Issues, 6 May 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁹⁰ John Foster Dulles, "News conference Statement by Dulles, June 28, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 625.

⁹¹ Donald Lancaster, "Power Politics At the Geneva Convention 1954," in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 124-125.

⁹² Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 42.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

⁹⁴ Donald Lancaster, "Power Politics At the Geneva Convention 1954," in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 135. Anthony Eden, *Toward Peace in Indochina* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966), 6.

⁹⁵ "Final Declaration of the Geneva Conference," (July 21, 1954), in Fred L. Israel, ed., *Major Peace Treaties of Modern History, 1648-1967*. vol IV, 2705-2708.

⁹⁶ "Agreement on the Cessation Of Hostilities In Vietnam" (July 20, 1954) in Gettleman, Marvin, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*, 137-144.

CHAPTER 4

¹ "Lao Dong Party Study Document on Revolutionary Strategy in the South, 1960 (Extracts)" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 53. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan First Secretary, Central Committee Vietnam Workers Party*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), 27.

² The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: The Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975*. trans. Merle L. Pribbenow (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 432. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 22.

³ However, U.S. military leaders were well aware of this tactic. See Memorandum from Brigadier General C.H. Bonesteel, III to the Secretary of Defense, "Future US Action Regarding Indochina, 9 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁴ During World War II the Vietnamese Communists used this "peace" strategy coupled with revolutionary preparations. However, since that time the Vietminh had won much greater control and influence throughout Vietnam and therefore stood to lose the gains if public support waned. Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 67.

⁵ Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal by Ho Chi Minh on the Occasion of the Celebration of the August Revolution and National Day, September 2, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 671.

⁶ Ho Chi Minh openly praised the revolutionary tactics of Mao Zedong and considered his revolutionary strategy to be a model for the revolution in Vietnam. Ho Chi Minh, "Political Report Read at the Second National Congress of the Viet-Nam Worker's Party, Held In February, 1951" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*. ed. Bernard Fall

(New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 207-208. Ho Chi Minh, "Speech Opening The First Theoretical Course of Nguyen Ai Quoc School" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 315-318.

⁷ Quoted in Frank N. Trager, *Why Viet Nam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966), 95. Ho also noted: "I eagerly appeal to all genuine patriots, irrespective of their social class, creed, political stand, and former affiliation, to cooperate sincerely with us and fight for the sake of our country and our people so as to bring about peace and achieve reunification, independence, and democracy for our beloved Viet-Nam." Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal Made After the Successful Conclusion of the Geneva Agreements July 22, 1954" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 273.

⁸ "NIE 63-1-55, 'Probable Developments in North Vietnam to July 1956,' July 19, 1955" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 709. "Note from Pham Van Dong to the Geneva Co-Chairmen, April 9, 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 16. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 7. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 20,24.

⁹ "Communique of the Lao dong Party Executive Committee on Its Eighth Conference, August 22, 1955" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 8-10. Vo Nguyen Giap, "Address by Giap, October 31, 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 23. "Internal Study Document by Secretary of the Lao Dong Party Committee for the South Le Duan: 'The Path of Revolution in the South,' November 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 25. The document noted: "In order to resist the U.S.-Dien regime, the Southern people have only one way to save the country and themselves, and that is the Revolutionary path. There is no other path but Revolution. That is why we must push the revolutionary movement of the South in order to reset the U.S. -Dien regime."

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ "Article by Tran Van Giau on Hanoi Radio, November 23, 1957 (Extracts)" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 34. General Giap also noted: "This time, the Central Conference heard the report of the Political Bureau about the leadership of activities to struggle for unification and decided that in the recent period, education within the party and among the people about the unification struggle task had deficiencies, especially in not yet making the Party and all the people realize clearly that fundamentally the struggle for unification is a revolutionary task. Because of the failure to realize that basic point clearly, there appeared weaknesses in thought or action. . . ." "Address by Giap, October 31, 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 23.

¹² "Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam," Chapter 2, Articles 14 and 16; Chapter 5, Article 24, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/genevacc.htm> (accessed November

27, 2007). These broad clauses forbid the interference and subversion of zones by opposing sides.

¹³ Ho Chi Minh, "Appeal on the Occasion of the Celebration of the August Revolution and National Day, September 2, 1954" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 276. "Appeal by Former Chairman of the Resistance Administrative Committee of Nam Bo Pham Back to People in the South, November 4, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 685. "Speech by Ho Chi Minh to the 7th Enlarge Plenum of the Viet-Nam Workers' Party Central Committee, March 12, 1954" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 1, 693. See also Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), 14.

¹⁴ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 92. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), 24. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 22.

¹⁵ "Communique of the Lao dong Party Executive Committee on Its Eighth Conference, August 22, 1955" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 8. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 5-6.

¹⁶ Ho Chi Minh, "Tenth Anniversary of the National Day of the Democratic Republic of Viet-Nam, September 1955" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 295-296. Ho Chi Minh remarked: "The other democracies also give us priceless assistance in or work of rehabilitation. This aid is carried out in the form of supply of equipment, machines, and technicians. Many economic and cultural sectors of Viet-Nam benefit by this assistance." The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 436.

¹⁷ The Military History Institute of Vietnam. *Victory in Vietnam*, 14.

¹⁸ For example, George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 103.

¹⁹ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966).

²⁰ General Giap discussed this concept of Communist insurgent strategy in General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War*, 50. "Article by Tran Van Giau on Hanoi Radio, November 23, 1957 (Extracts)" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 33. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 43. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 25-26.

²¹ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 446. See also Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 23.

-
- ²² U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam; Office of Assistant Chief of Staff–J-2. Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. *Study 67-037: Strategy Since 1954*. 29 June 1967. Headquarters Armed Forces of R.V.N. Office of Joint General Staff–J-2, 13, http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/3212_RecsMACVPt3.pdf (accessed November 27, 2007).
- ²³ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy* (New York: Random House, 1986), 61.
- ²⁴ Lam Quang Thi, *Twenty-Five Year Century: A South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War to the Fall of Saigon* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 115.
- ²⁵ “Telegram From Chief of Military Advisory Assistance Group (Indochina) Gen. John O’Daniel to Commander-In-Chief, Pacific, August 9, 1955” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 3.
- ²⁶ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 30.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, 65-66.
- ²⁸ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 58.
- ²⁹ Alexander Solzhenitsyn, “Live Not By Lies” in *Historic Documents of 1974* (Washington, DC.: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1975), 131.
- ³⁰ General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People’s War*, 57-58. U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam; Office of Assistant Chief of Staff–J-2. Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. *Study 67-037: Strategy Since 1954*. 29 June 1967. Headquarters Armed Forces of R.V.N. Office of Joint General Staff–J-2. 14-15, http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/3212_RecsMACVPt3.pdf (accessed November 27, 2007).
- ³¹ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American’s Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 369.
- ³² Ho Chi Minh, “The Party’s Line in the Period of The Democratic Front (1936-39)” in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 130. Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places: A Vietnamese Woman’s Journey From War to Peace* (New York: Penguin Books, 1989), x.
- ³³ Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 128-129. Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 16-17.

-
- ³⁴ Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 16-17.
- ³⁵ John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm> (accessed August 1, 2007).
- ³⁶ Cited in Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao: Partners in the Struggle for Laos* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1970). 41.
- ³⁷ National Intelligence Council, "ORE 25-48 The Breakup of the Colonial Empires and Its Implications for US Security, 3 September 1948" in *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: Government Printing Office, 2005), 1-15.
- ³⁸ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 43. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 40. Pham noted: "Standing shoulder to shoulder with their Southern compatriots, the people in the North are translating their hatred into the will to fight for reunification" Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 25.
- ³⁹ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 239.
- ⁴⁰ Lam Quang Thi, *Twenty-Five Year Century*, 290. The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 43. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 25. *Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam* (South Vietnam: Liberation Editions, 1965), 11, 15.
- ⁴¹ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 52.
- ⁴² David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 49.
- ⁴³ Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered From All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 16.
- ⁴⁴ Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 37-38.
- ⁴⁵ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 81.
- ⁴⁶ Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, x-xii.
- ⁴⁷ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 434.
- ⁴⁸ Cited in Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 242.

⁴⁹ Robert Templer, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam* (London: Abacus, 1998), 342. However, Templer noted correctly that most Vietnamese youths are more concerned with consumer culture than Communist ideology.

⁵⁰ Doan Van Toai, "A Lament for Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine*, March 29, 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/032981vietnam-mag.html> (accessed June 15, 2007).

⁵¹ See Chapter Two.

⁵² Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 164-165. See Chapter Six.

⁵³ Ho Chi Minh, "Report to the Meeting of Representatives of the Hanoi People on the Success of the Sixth Session of the National Assembly (First Legislature), February 15, 1957" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 308. Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brigadier General Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 16-19.

⁵⁴ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 122-123.

⁵⁵ For example, Ho Chi Minh, "Speech Opening The First Theoretical Course of Nguyen Ai Quoc School" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 315-318. "Lao Dong Party Directive for the South: 'Situation and Tasks for 1959'" in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*, 74. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 7. The Communist strategists in Hanoi, like Le Duan, often mentioned "temporary" allies in official documents, considering these political personalities and organizations to be tactical expedients.

⁵⁶ "Letter from the Party Committee for South Vietnam to Party Chapters March 28, 1960" in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 82-83.

⁵⁷ "Lao Dong Party Directive for the South: 'Situation and Tasks for 1959'" in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 74. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 17, 18, 25. Ho Chi Minh, *Against U.S. Aggression For National Salvation* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1967), 36.

⁵⁸ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*, 30-31.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

⁶⁰ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 447.

⁶¹ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy*, 80.

⁶² Ho Chi Minh, "Speech Opening The First Theoretical Course of Nguyen Ai Quoc School 7 September 1957" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 316. He remarked: "The North is in the transitional stage to socialism. The socialist revolution is the most difficult and far-reaching

change. We have to build up a completely new society unknown in our history. We have radically to change thousand-year-old customs and habits, ways of thinking, and prejudices.”

⁶³ Edward Lansdale, in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 70.

⁶⁴ “Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam,” Chapter 2, Articles 12 and 14, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/genevacc.htm> (accessed November 27, 2007).

⁶⁵ Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C. : U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 20-23.

⁶⁶ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy*, 39.

⁶⁷ Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 21.

⁶⁸ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 5-6.

⁶⁹ “Ho Chi Minh’s Message to Vietnamese Catholics, 1954,” in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*, 47-48.

⁷⁰ Major General Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Dinh Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 21-22. These South Vietnamese Generals have provided an excellent account of the tactics used by the Vietminh to hinder the mass exodus from the North.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷² Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 21, 25, 45. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 14. Hanoi’s strategy involved a “popular front,” a pivotal Communist doctrine that demanded that no significant group, location, or personality remain outside Party influence and control.

⁷³ George F. Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” July 1947” in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds., *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: BasicBooks, 1997), 163.

⁷⁴ “Telegram From Chief of Military Advisory Assistance Group (Indochina) Gen. John O’Daniel to Commander-In-Chief, Pacific, August 9, 1955” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 4. Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 325.

⁷⁵ “Telegram From Chief of Military Advisory Assistance Group (Indochina) Gen. John O’Daniel to Commander-In-Chief, Pacific, August 9, 1955” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 4.

⁷⁶ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 431.

⁷⁷ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 338.

⁷⁸ U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam; Office of Assistant Chief of Staff–J-2. Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. *Study 67-037: Strategy Since 1954*. 29 June 1967. Headquarters Armed Forces of R.V.N. Office of Joint General Staff–J-2., 9, http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/3212_RecsMACVPt3.pdf (accessed November 27, 2007).

⁷⁹ “Letter from Pham Van Dong to Ngo Dinh Diem, March 7, 1958” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 35.

⁸⁰ “Note from the British Embassy in Moscow to the Soviet Foreign Ministry, April 9, 1956” in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 17-18.

⁸¹ “Agreement on the Cessation Of Hostilities In Vietnam (July 20, 1954) Geneva Accords” in Gettleman, Marvin, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (New York: Fawcett Publications, 1965), 137. See Chapter 1, Article 1.

⁸² Ho Chi Minh, “Letter to the Cadres From South Viet-Nam Regrouped in the North June 19, 1956” in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 302-303.

⁸³ U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam; Office of Assistant Chief of Staff–J-2. Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. *Study 67-037: Strategy Since 1954*. 29 June 1967. Headquarters Armed Forces of R.V.N. Office of Joint General Staff–J-2., 22, http://www.lexisnexis.com/documents/academic/upa_cis/3212_RecsMACVPt3.pdf (accessed November 27, 2007).

⁸⁴ “Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Viet Nam,” Chapter 1, Article 5; Chapter 2, Articles 14 and 16; Chapter 5, Article 24, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/genevacc.htm> (accessed November 27, 2007).

⁸⁵ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 14-15. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 45.

⁸⁶ “Lao Dong Party Directive for the South: ‘Situation and Tasks for 1959’” in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 74. See also *Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam*.

⁸⁷ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy*, 97.

⁸⁸ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 44.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 16, 47.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 44.

⁹¹ "Telegram From Chief of Military Advisory Assistance Group (Indochina) Gen. John O'Daniel to Commander-In-Chief, Pacific, August 9, 1955" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 3.

⁹² Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 38.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, "Misconceptions About Russia Are a Threat to America," in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds. *The American Encounter*, 423. Solzhenitsyn made the point that the American media "often unwittingly adopts" Soviet or Communist propaganda.

⁹⁵ Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 45.

⁹⁶ Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots*, 14.

⁹⁷ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 14.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 43.

⁹⁹ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 212.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 352, 213. Lansdale also noted that the Communist Vietnamese targeted these economic teams for assassination and later in 1967 placed a bounty on their heads. He remarked: "One cadre killed is given the same high rating as one American killed, in listing merit for promotions and awards among the forces of the Vietcong and the North Vietnamese Army. The Communists established this equivalent rate on orders of March 15, 1967."

¹⁰¹ "Ordinance No. 6 of the Republic of Viet-Nam on Security Measures Against Those Considered Dangerous to Public Security, January 11, 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. vol. 2, 15.

¹⁰² The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 45. This source noted: "Faced with the demands of the masses and the need to protect our revolutionary organizations, a number of provincial and district Party committees ordered these cells and units into action to eliminate the most dangerous and vicious traitors, spies, and hooligans in local areas. In Rach Gia, Ca Mau, Kien Phong, Kin Tuong, Ben Tre, and many other locations the killing of such traitors, spies, and police thugs raised the morale of the people, caused divisions in the enemy's ranks, and reduced acts of terrorism by the enemy."

¹⁰³ State Department Memo excerpt–1955, in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 61-62.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 229-230.

¹⁰⁶ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 57.

¹⁰⁷ W.W. Rostow, “The Case for Vietnam,” *Parameters*, Winter, 1996-1997, 37-50, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/96winter/rostow/htm> (accessed February 7, 2006).

¹⁰⁸ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 80. Moreover, Pike asserted that Diem did not even have complete control over the country when the instability and subversion started under Hanoi’s auspices.

¹⁰⁹ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1972), 43. Lawrence E. Grinter and Peter M. Dunn, eds., *The American War in Vietnam: Lessons, Legacies, and Implications For Future Conflicts* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Inc., 1987), 16. This source noted that in 1983, a North Vietnamese General named Vo Bam told a French television crew: “On May 19, 1959, I had the privilege of being designated by the Vietnamese Communist Party. . . to unleash a military attack on the South to liberate the South and reunify the fatherland.”

¹¹⁰ Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 35, 36.

¹¹¹ *Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam*, 8-9. This Vietcong propaganda source extolled the “liquidation of a notorious hangmen named Suy, head of the ‘strategic hamlet’ and also responsible for the local organization of a reactionary party.”

¹¹² David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy*, 105.

¹¹³ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 248.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 246-247.

¹¹⁵ Le Ly Hayslip, *When Heaven and Earth Changed Places*, 128-129.

¹¹⁶ Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots*, 66.

¹¹⁷ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy*, 170.

¹¹⁸ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 353-354.

¹¹⁹ For example, Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 50.

¹²⁰ Ho Chi Minh, "A Talk with Ho Chi Minh [1962]" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 353-357. During this interview Pham Van Dong denied that Hanoi had sent Northerners to the South to assist the fighting. He stated: "We fully realize the American imperialists wish to provoke a situation in the course of which they could use the heroic struggle of the South Vietnamese people as a pretext for the destruction of our economic and cultural achievements. We shall offer them no pretext that could give rise to an American military intervention against North Viet-Nam."

¹²¹ Douglas Pike, *Viet Cong*, 102.

¹²² For example, Ho Chi Minh, "Speech Opening The First Theoretical Course of Nguyen Ai Quoc School, 7 September 1957" in *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution*, 315-321.

¹²³ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House* (Boston: The Riverside Press, Cambridge, 1965), 320. See also *Foreign Relations of the United States*, John F. Kennedy Administration, 1961-1963, vol.xxiv, *Laos Crisis*, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ho/frus/kennedyj/c15873.htm> (accessed November 27, 2007).

¹²⁴ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power*, 44-49.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ "The Final Declarations of the Geneva Conference July 21, 1954," <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc2.html> (accessed November 27, 2007). Article 12 noted: "In their relations with Cambodia, Laos and Viet-Nam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs."

¹²⁷ Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao*, 61-63.

¹²⁸ Cited in Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao*, 66.

¹²⁹ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam*, 52-54.

¹³⁰ "The Final Declarations of the Geneva Conference July 21, 1954," <http://vietnam.vassar.edu/doc2.html> (accessed November 27, 2007).

¹³¹ "Conquest by Negotiation," *Time*. January 21, 1957, 27.

¹³² "Trouble in the Hills." *Time*. July 25, 1955, 25.

¹³³ Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao*, 66-67.

¹³⁴ Ibid., 67-70.

¹³⁵ Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *A Thousand Days*, 334.

¹³⁶ Paul F. Langer and Joseph J. Zasloff, *North Vietnam and the Pathet Lao*, 71-72.

CHAPTER 5

¹³⁷ Roger Hilsman, *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967), 130.

¹³⁸ John F. Kennedy, "Inaugural Address, January 20, 1961," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: 1961* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1962), 1-2.

¹³⁹ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 1. Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and the NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 16.

¹⁴⁰ Walter Cronkite, *Walter Cronkite Remembers the 20th Century: Times of Turbulence* (CBS Inc. and Cronkite Production Inc., 1997). 51 minutes.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Pierre Salinger, *With Kennedy* (Garden City, New York: Double Day & Co., 1966), 320-329.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 325-326.

¹⁴⁴ Presidents Lyndon Johnson and Richard Nixon likewise voiced their concerns about the biased news coverage of the war in Vietnam. William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports* (New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1976), 386. Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 162.

¹⁴⁵ Bernard Fall, *The Two-Viet Nams: A Political and Military Analysis* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1961), 3. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*, ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 79. Tran Xuan Ly, "Glimpses of Vietnam," in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 3.

¹⁴⁶ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1.

¹⁴⁷ National Intelligence Council, "Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam, 17 July 1969," *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, PA: Government Printing Office, 2005), 11.

¹⁴⁸ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 5.

¹⁴⁹ Bernard Fall, *The Two-Viet Nams: A Political and Military Analysis*, 3.

¹⁵⁰ Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: Setting the Stage*. (Boston: Boston Publishing Co., 1981), 36. "Memorandum from Secretary of the Army, Robert T. Stevens, on Indochina, 19 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). "Remarks Made by Major General Thomas J.H. Trapnall, Jr., Former Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, 3 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). These U.S. military planners were well aware of the obstacles imposed by the topography and climate of Vietnam.

¹⁵¹ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 5.

¹⁵² Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 205. Ho declared "In military affairs, time is of prime importance. Time ranges first among the three factors for victory, before the terrain conditions and the people's support."

¹⁵³ Truong Son, *A Bitter Dry Season For the Americans* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Press, 1966), 35.

¹⁵⁴ Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience*, 53.

¹⁵⁵ Cited in Tom Mangold and John Penycate, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi* (New York: Random House, 1985), 260.

¹⁵⁶ National Intelligence Council, "The Outlook from Hanoi: Factors Affecting North Vietnam's Policy on the War in Vietnam, 5 February 1970," *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, PA: Government Printing Office, 2005), 6-7.

¹⁵⁷ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 283. National Intelligence Council, "The Pacification Effort in Vietnam, 16 January 1969," *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 9.

¹⁵⁸ Tom Mangold and John Penycate, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, 260-262.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 30.

¹⁶⁰ The Cu Chi Tunnels are a well-known tourist destination in Vietnam, complete with souvenirs, refreshments, and even a firing range where visitors can fire a live AK-47 or an American M-16. Tourists also crawl in the larger tunnels, which are often enlarged for such activity.

¹⁶¹ Christian G. Appy, ed. *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 17.

¹⁶² Christian G. Appy, ed. *Patriots*, 6-7.

¹⁶³ Pham Gia Trinh, "The Tet in Vietnam," in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*, 57-64. The author provides an interesting description of the significance and rituals of the Tet celebration.

¹⁶⁴ Tom Mangold and John Penycate, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, 258. See also Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 4-5.

¹⁶⁵ That is not to say that the Johnson administration did not conduct extensive military operations in the region aimed at eliminating the insurgents at Cu Chi.

¹⁶⁶ Tom Mangold and John Penycate, *The Tunnels of Cu Chi*, 263-264.

¹⁶⁷ Robert Templer, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam* (London: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998), 20-21. See also David Chanof and Doan Van Tao, *Portrait of the Enemy* (New York: Random House, 1986), xv.

¹⁶⁸ Richard Nixon, *The Real War* (New York: Warner Books, 1980), 102. Nixon lamented that this development had "an enormous effect on the subsequent events on the war." Brig. Gen. Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations And Activities in the Laotian Panhandle* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 4-17. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 9-19.

¹⁶⁹ William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 181. Also of importance, the U.S. military did allow "hot pursuit," a limited pursuit of the enemy into Cambodia or Laos. President Nixon later made the elimination of these bases in Cambodia and Laos a major goal of his military policy in the Vietnam War and policy of Vietnamization.

¹⁷⁰ See Norman B. Hannah, *The Key to Failure: Laos and the Vietnam War* (New York: Madison Books, 1987). Hannah not only made the point about North Vietnam's reliance on the Ho Chi Minh trail but also the author discussed the flawed U.S. policy of allowing this logistical development.

¹⁷¹ Bui Tin Interviewed by Stephen Young, "How North Vietnam Won the War, " Viet Myths Conference website, <http://www.viet-myths.net/buitin.htm> (accessed January 15, 2007). Bui Tin was the North Vietnamese colonel who accepted the surrender of the Saigon government in 1975. See also Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend: A North Vietnamese Perspective on the War*. trans. Nguyen Ngoc Bich (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 2002), 41, 74-76.

¹⁷² Hanoi feared that the United States would interdict the Ho Chi Minh trail by using troops. Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 74-76.

¹⁷³ "Zhou Enlai, Kang Sheng and Pham Van Dong, Hoang Van Thai, Pham Hung and Others in the COSVN Delegation" Beijing, 20 and 21 April 1969. *Cold War International History Project*, http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=lib... (accessed May 24, 2006).

¹⁷⁴ Michael Herr, *Dispatches*. (New York: Avon Book, 1978), 9.

¹⁷⁵ John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*, v.

¹⁷⁶ Lynn R. August and Barbara A. Gianola. "Symptoms of War Trauma Induced Psychiatric Disorders: Southeast Asian Refugees and Vietnam Veterans" *International Migration Review*, vol. 21, No. 3, (Autumn, 1987): 820.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. 823.

¹⁷⁸ B.G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor: How the Vietnam Generation Was Robbed of its Heroes and its History* (Dallas, Texas: Verity Press, Inc., 1998), Chapter 2.

¹⁷⁹ James O. Pittman. Review of: Eric T. Dean. *Shook Over Hell: Post-Traumatic Stress, Vietnam, and the Civil War*. 1997. *The Journal of Military History*, vol.62, No. 4 (Oct., 1998): 896.

¹⁸⁰ See B.G. Burkett and Glenna Whitley, *Stolen Valor*.

¹⁸¹ Dr. Phoebe S. Spinrad, "Patriotism as Pathology," Viet Myths Conference website, <http://www.viet-myths.net/> (accessed 6-18-07).

¹⁸² For example, Neil Sheehan, ed., *The Pentagon Papers: The Secret History of the Vietnam War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971), xiii.

¹⁸³ Bill McCloud, ed., *What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam* (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989), 20.

¹⁸⁴ See Chapter Six.

¹⁸⁵ For example, John Kerry, “Vietnam War Veteran John Kerry’s Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22, 1971, http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnkerry.com/ker_sfrc_71.htm (accessed June 18, 2007).

¹⁸⁶ Rudolph Rummel, “Rudolph Rummel Talks About the Miracle of Liberty and Peace,” *International Society for Individual Liberty*, <http://www.isil.org/peace/philosophy/liberty.html> (accessed 6-17-07). Professor Rummel has coined the term “democide” to describe this murder by totalitarian and authoritarian governments.

¹⁸⁷ Neil Sheehan, ed., *The Pentagon Papers*, x.

¹⁸⁸ Walter Cronkite, *Walter Cronkite Remembers the 20th Century: Times of Turbulence* (CBS Inc. and Cronkite Production Inc., 1997). 51 minutes.

¹⁸⁹ William Westmoreland, *A Soldier Reports*, 321-325; Lt. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: the History, 1946-1975* (Novato, CA: Presidio Press, 1988), 484-486.

¹⁹⁰ Walter Cronkite, *Walter Cronkite Remembers the 20th Century: Times of Turbulence* (CBS Inc. and Cronkite Production Inc., 1997). 51 minutes.

¹⁹¹ Bill McCloud, ed., *What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam*, 5.

¹⁹² Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam* (New York: David McKay co., Inc., 1969), 177, 191, Chapter 13.

¹⁹³ Lt. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War*, 486.

¹⁹⁴ National Intelligence Council, “Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam, 17 July 1969,” *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 20.

¹⁹⁵ Lt. Gen. Phillip B. Davidson, *Vietnam at War: the History*, 486.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Bill McCloud, ed., *What Should We Tell Our Children About Vietnam*, 61.

¹⁹⁸ John Kerry, “Vietnam War Veteran John Kerry’s Testimony Before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, April 22, 1971,” http://www.vietnamveteransagainstjohnkerry.com/ker_sfrc_71.htm (accessed June 18, 2007).

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

-
- ²⁰¹ For example, John Kerry, "The Hope is There: Looking Forward Toward the Next Horizon," *Vital Speeches of the Day*, August 1, 2004, 612; Jonah Goldberg, "A (Tall) Pretzel of Asininity," *National Review*, November 20, 2006, 8.
- ²⁰² Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), introduction.
- ²⁰³ David K. Shipler, "Robert McNamara and the Ghosts of Vietnam," *New York Times Magazine*, October 10, 1997, <http://partners.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/081097vietnam-mcnamara.html> (accessed May 30, 2007).
- ²⁰⁴ Bui Tin, *From Enemy to Friend*, 12.
- ²⁰⁵ W.W. Rostow, "The Case for Vietnam," *Parameters*, Winter, 1996-1997, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/96winter/rostow/htm> (accessed January 15, 2007).
- ²⁰⁶ Richard Stacewicz, *Winter Soldiers: An Oral History of the Vietnam Veterans Against the War* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1997), ix, 402.
- ²⁰⁷ Thomas Sowell, "War Then and Now," *Capitalism Magazine*, June 4, 2004, <http://www.capmag.com/article.asp?ID=3727> (accessed May 30, 2007).
- ²⁰⁸ For example, Ron Kovic at the 1972 Republican National Convention, in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*, 524-527.
- ²⁰⁹ Harry G. Summers, Jr., *The Vietnam War Almanac*, 1.
- ²¹⁰ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 5. See Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon: A Political History of Vietnam* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1958). Buttinger's study, though one of the older ones, is highly useful for gaining an understanding of the basics of Vietnam's history.
- ²¹¹ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 36-37.
- ²¹² *Ibid.*, 53.
- ²¹³ Cited in Maj. Gen Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Din Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 1.
- ²¹⁴ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 54. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems* (Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1966), 7-8. Joseph Buttinger, *The Smaller Dragon*, 97-98.
- ²¹⁵ *Ibid.* Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study* (United States Government as represented by the Secretary of the Army, 1989), 8-9.

²¹⁶ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience: Setting the Stage*, 54. Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study*, 14-15. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems*, 8.

²¹⁷ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 57. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems*, 9.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

²¹⁹ Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems*, 5.

²²⁰ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 59. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Traditional Viet-Nam: Some Historical Stages* (Hanoi: Democratic Republic of Vietnam, n.d.), 27.

²²¹ Maj. Gen Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Din Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 5. Ronald J. Cima, ed., *Vietnam: A Country Study*, 16-17. Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Traditional Viet-Nam: Some Historical Stages*, 41-48. Democratic Republic of Vietnam, *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems*, 11.

²²² Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 69-70.

²²³ Cited in Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 70.

²²⁴ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 70.

²²⁵ Maj. Gen Nguyen Duy Hinh and Brig. Gen. Tran Din Tho, *The South Vietnamese Society*, 5.

²²⁶ Nguyen Khac Vien, ed., *Traditional Viet-Nam: Some Historical Stages*, 73-77.

²²⁷ Ho Chi Minh was no different from other Communist leaders in that he followed the example of Joseph Stalin and Mao Zedong, men who had completely reoriented and/or destroyed national culture as a means of controlling the populace. Ho's contempt of "patriarchal customs" and tradition is evident. Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard Fall, 36, 117.

²²⁸ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard Fall, 316.

²²⁹ Edward Doyle, and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience*, 58. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), 140.

²³⁰ Ho Chi Minh, "Founding of the Vietminh Doc Lap Dong Minh Hoi (June 1941)," in Marvin Gettleman, ed., *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis* (New York: Fawcett Publications), 57.

²³¹ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard Fall, 340.

²³² Trinh Quang Do, *Saigon to San Diego: Memoir of a Boy Who Escaped from Communist Vietnam* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, Inc., 2004), 9.

²³³ George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*, 103-104.

²³⁴ Dan Van Sung, "A Historical View of the Vietnamese Nationalist Cause," in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam*, 138.

²³⁵ This is evident in (1) the false promises of both the Vietnamese Communist Party and the National Liberation Front, organizations that promised democratic freedoms and rights that they never planned to carry out, and (2) the many testimonies of former Vietnamese Communists who describe the post-war years. See Chapter Six.

²³⁶ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 17. George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* Second edition (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1986), 280.

²³⁷ Robert Templer, *Shadows and Wind: A View of Modern Vietnam*, 17.

²³⁸ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 17. Karnow noted: "The essential reality of the struggle was that the Communists, imbued with an almost fanatical sense of dedication to a reunified Vietnam under their control, saw the war against the United States and its South Vietnamese ally as the continuation of two thousand years of resistance to Chinese and later French rule. They were prepared to accept limitless casualties to attain their sacred objective."

²³⁹ George C. Herring, *America's Longest War*, 280. Herring noted: "Vietnam makes it clear that the United States cannot uphold its own concept of world order in the face of a stubborn and resolute, although much weaker, foe."

²⁴⁰ Richard Nixon, *The Real War*, 123.

CHAPTER 6

⁵⁶³ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams* (New York: Arbor House, 1985), 134, 140. "Memorandum Prepared in the Office of the Central Intelligence Agency," January 24, 1969 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. Vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1970* (Washington, D.C., 2006), 13-14. National Intelligence Council, "The Pacification Effort in Vietnam," 16 January 1969 *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975* (Pittsburgh, PA:

Government Printing Office, 2005), 4-29. Although these reports are positive in regard to GVN security, the Communist threat remained as a real problem that demanded additional aide and efforts. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 15. Col. William LeGro, *Vietnam From Cease-Fire to Capitulation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center for Military History, 1981), 179. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 3, 4. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-1995* (Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 2000), 224. John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 538.

⁵⁶⁴ Sir Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam* (New York: David McKay co., Inc., 1969), 13. Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 527, 529.

⁵⁶⁵ President Nixon used the slogan “Peace with Honor” during the 1972 presidential elections but the theme was similar to his 1968 campaign when he articulated his secret plan for ending the war in Vietnam.

⁵⁶⁶ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 104.

⁵⁶⁷ H.R. Halderman, *The Halderman Diaries* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1994), 153.

⁵⁶⁸ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 104. Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 144, 148.

⁵⁶⁹ Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 44-71. I am referring here to Richard Nixon’s experience with Alger Hiss.

⁵⁷⁰ Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 44-46, 50-52, 71, 344.

⁵⁷¹ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 127. Richard M. Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President. Year 1969* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971), 546.

⁵⁷² Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 113.

⁵⁷³ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 105, 106. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 341-343. Central Intelligence Agency, “Soviet Thinking About a Sino-US Rapprochement,” February 1971 (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007).

⁵⁷⁴ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 131. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 269, 270. Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, 1969*, 546.

⁵⁷⁵ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 111, 147. "Memorandum From the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon," January 29, 1969 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1970*, 42. Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Thinking About a Sino-US Rapprochement," February 1971 (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 570. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 226. National Intelligence Council, "Possible Changes in the Sino-Soviet Relationship," 25 October 1973 *Estimative Products on Vietnam*, 6.

⁵⁷⁶ Central Intelligence Agency, "Soviet Thinking About a Sino-US Rapprochement," February 1971 (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). National Intelligence Estimate, "Chinese Reactions to Possible Developments in Indochina," September 13, 1970, 4., <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007). National Intelligence Estimate, "The USSR and China," 12 August 1969, 1-2., <http://www.foia.cia.gov/search.asp> (accessed 12 August 2007).

⁵⁷⁷ Today, these bunkers are a major tourist attraction in Beijing, China, called the "Underground City." See <http://www.china.org.cn/english/travel/125961.htm>.

⁵⁷⁸ "Editorial Note 5," in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. 1 *Foundations of Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2003), Editorial Note. Nixon stated "While we are the richest nation and the most powerful nation in the non-Communist world, we must remember that we are only two hundred million Americans, and there are two billion people in the non-Communist world. It is time to develop a new diplomacy for the United States, a diplomacy to deal with future aggression--so that when the freedom of friendly nations is threatened by aggression, we help them with our money and help them with our arms; but we let them fight the war and don't fight the war for them." It should be noted also that President Nixon was far less conservative on his social policies than many believe today.

⁵⁷⁹ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 105, 134-136. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719*, 2. Brig. Gen. Soutchay Vongsavanh, *RLG Military Operations And Activities in the Laotian Panhandle* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981), 102-104. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 1-19.

⁵⁸⁰ Richard Nixon, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States 1969*, 37.

⁵⁸¹ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 101-103.

⁵⁸² Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 112. “Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club, July 29, 1967 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. 1, *Foundations of Foreign Policy*. “Minutes of National Security Council Meeting,” January 25, 1969, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1976*, 40.

⁵⁸³ Some GVN leaders did however fear an outright abandonment by the U.S. “Telegram From the Embassy in Vietnam to Department of State,” January 24, 1969 *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1976*, 16. Bui Diem and David Chanoff, *In the Jaws of History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987), 248.

⁵⁸⁴ See Texas Tech University’s Vietnam Center and its online collection of oral history interviews conducted with Vietnam War veterans. These interviews are available at <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/interviews/index.htm>. Although a variety of opinions are evident, veterans who “stuck it out” had some very important perspectives to report. For instance, see interviews with General John Arick, William Badger, Steve Maxner, and Thomas Brown.

⁵⁸⁵ However, that is not an endorsement of those who acted violently. Peter J. Brennan, president of the Building and Construction Trades Council of Greater New York (City) and Noah Abelson are two of the more known organizers of the pro-war rallies that took place in 1970 in the aftermath of the Kent State demonstrations and tragedy.

⁵⁸⁶ John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 337. The same soldier shortly thereafter became discouraged in the aftermath of the bloody fighting at Hue.

⁵⁸⁷ See Dave Grossman, *On Killing: The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 1995).

⁵⁸⁸ General George Washington, “Recruiting and Maintaining an Army,” September 24, 1776, <http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/P/gw1/writings/brf/recrui.htm>.

⁵⁸⁹ “Declaration of Causes and Necessity of Taking Arms,” in Jack N. Rakove, ed., *Founding America: Documents From the Revolution to the Bill of Rights* (New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2006), 58.

⁵⁹⁰ The RVNAF were joined by Thai, Laotian, Cambodian, New Zealand, Australian, South Korean, Filipino, and some Taiwanese forces (30 advisers). These Free World Military Forces contributed significantly to the war effort and support of South Vietnam. See Stanley R. Larsen and James L. Collins, Jr., *Allied Participation in Vietnam* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975).

⁵⁹¹ Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719*, 3. General Cao Van Vien and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections on the Vietnam War* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980), 139. “Minutes of National Security Council Meeting,” January 25, 1969,

Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1976* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 2006), 32.

⁵⁹² Quang Thi Lam, *Twenty-Five Year Century: A South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War to the Fall of Saigon* (Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2001), 289-290.

⁵⁹³ “The Quang 1205 Document: “Report of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff of the VNA [Vietnamese Peoples Army] General-Lieutenant Tran Van Quang at the Politburo Meeting of the TSK PTV, 15 September 1972. trans. from Vietnamese into Russian. Moscow: 1972, <http://www.ojc.org/powforum/1205doc.htm> (accessed 15 August 2007).

⁵⁹⁴ For instance, see Viet Tan Reform Party website at http://www.viettan.org/rubrique.php3?id_rubrique=42.

⁵⁹⁵ General Cao Van Vien and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections on the Vietnam War*, 140. Maj. Gen. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Lam Son 719*, 5. “Minutes of National Security Council Meeting,” January 25, 1969 *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1976*, 26. Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 185.

⁵⁹⁶ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982), 12.

⁵⁹⁷ Truong Nhu Tang with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Vietcong Memoir* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985), 203. Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and NVA: The Real Story of North Vietnam's Armed Forces* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1992), 185-188. Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 40-42, 126-127.

⁵⁹⁸ John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 492.

⁵⁹⁹ An example of this romantic view of WWII can be found in a movie from that time, *Mission to Moscow*, which glamorized Joseph Stalin. Alan Brinkley, *American History: A Survey*. 11th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2003), 761.

⁶⁰⁰ Martin Luther King, Jr., “Beyond Vietnam: A Time to Break the Silence,” April 4, 1967, <http://www.americanrhetoric.com/speeches/mlkatimetobreaksilence.htm> (accessed March 23, 2008).

⁶⁰¹ Peter Jensen, “The Airwar and Then. . . More War!” From AUGUR 3, no.12, 7-21 April 1972, in Ken Wachsberger, ed., *Voices From the Underground: Insider Histories of the Vietnam Era Underground Press*. vol. 1 (Tempe, AZ: Mica's Press, 1993), 8.

⁶⁰² “Zhou Enlai and Pham Van Dong, 19 April 1968,” in *Cold War International History Project Virtual Archive* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), <http://www>.

wilsoncenter.org/ index.cfm?topic_id= 1409&fuseaction=va2. document& identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item= The%20Vietnam%20 (Indochina)%20War(s).

⁶⁰³ Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), 269. Pham Van Dong is using a theme here that appears often in Party propaganda, alleging that the United States is always guilty of “gangsterism,” “criminality,” and “illegalities.” See also *Gunners Without Insignia* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1966), 57, 59.

⁶⁰⁴ Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*. ed. Tran Van Dinh (Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976), 163, 537. Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 597, 658.

⁶⁰⁵ Lee Duc Tho in John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 420. Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 516. General Vo Nguyen Giap, *The Military Art of People’s War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. ed. Russell Stetler (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970), 93. General Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*. trans. John Spragens, Jr. (New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1977), 12-13. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 263, 282. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 232.

⁶⁰⁶ Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 190, 191, 236. Central Intelligence Agency, “The Attitudes of North Vietnamese Leaders Toward Fighting and Negotiating,” 25 March 1968, (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007).

⁶⁰⁷ North Vietnamese leaders like Le Duan frequently used Ho Chi Minh’s memory as an inspiration to continue the fight against the South and the United States. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*, 125. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 238.

⁶⁰⁸ Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 192, 209, 211, 276. John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 351, 392. Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 506.

⁶⁰⁹ Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 303, 360.

⁶¹⁰ National Intelligence Council, “Capabilities of the Vietnamese Communists for Fighting in South Vietnam,” 17 July 1969 *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975*, 11. This document stated that about 200,000 of these youths reached the age of seventeen.

⁶¹¹ For example the Dellums Committee Hearings On War Crimes In Vietnam,” April 25, 1971, <http://members.aol.com/warlibrary/vwch1.htm>. Masquerading as an impartial fact finding meeting, the members could not hide their real objective. Congressman Parren Mitchell

asserted: "The people are war-weary and the Congress must assert its constitutional prerogative to end the longest war in history."

⁶¹² Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 182.

⁶¹³ The Military History Institute of Vietnam, *Victory in Vietnam: the Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975* trans. Merle L. Pribbenow (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 431, 436. Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 182. The fact that these numbers are high, open to debate, is irrelevant. Because the South refused to invade the North and took a defensive position, this defensive posture posed a major problem requiring more forces to defend innumerable vulnerable points that the enemy could exploit during offensive operations or an invasion.

⁶¹⁴ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 115. National Intelligence Council, "The Outlook for Cambodia," 6 August 1970, *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975*, 4-43. Central Intelligence Agency, "Communism and Cambodia," February 1972 (Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973), <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 12, 2007). Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 79.

⁶¹⁵ Russell R. Ross, ed., *Cambodia: A Country Study* (Washington, D.C. Federal Research Division, 1987), 14-22. This excellent source is online at <http://memory.loc.gov/frd/cs/khtoc.html>.

⁶¹⁶ "Memorandum of Conversation," July 29, 1969 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*, vol. 20, *Southeast Asia, 1969-1972* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 2006), 37.

⁶¹⁷ Lon Nol, an anti-Communist, was also a profiteer who sold supplies to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong prior to his assumption of power. Nevertheless, he was able to mobilize resistance against the enemy and offer a viable alternative to Khmer Rouge genocide.

⁶¹⁸ Russell R. Ross, ed., *Cambodia: A Country Study*, 22-23.

⁶¹⁹ General Cao Van Vien and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen, *Reflections on the Vietnam War*, 17-138.

⁶²⁰ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 149.

⁶²¹ Richard Nixon quoted in George Donelson Moss, *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994), 359.

⁶²² Quang Thi Lam, *Twenty-Five Year Century*, 270.

⁶²³ Tran Van Do, in Francois Sully, ed., *We the Vietnamese: Voices From Vietnam* (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1971), 205.

⁶²⁴ Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 144. The rocket attacks on civilians in 1969 were also a major problem for the Nixon administration. "Memorandum of Conversation," March 8, 1969 in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-1976*. vol. VI. *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1976*, 95.

⁶²⁵ Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and NVA*, 186.

⁶²⁶ Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam*, 179.

⁶²⁷ Ibid.

⁶²⁸ Henry Kissinger in John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 443, 437.

⁶²⁹ Walter Cronkite, *Eye of the World* (New York: Cowles Book Company, Inc., 1971), 108.

⁶³⁰ Michael Lee Lanning and Dan Cragg, *Inside the VC and NVA*, 185-186.

⁶³¹ See excerpts from US Air Force history in John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 535. However, the higher echelons of the North Vietnamese Party leadership remained resolved.

⁶³² "Mao Zedong and Le Duan; Beijing, the Great Hall of the People, 11 May 1970," in *Cold War International History Project Virtual Archive* (Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars), [http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20\(Indochina\)%20War\(s\)](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1409&fuseaction=va2.document&identifier=5034C820-96B6-175C-90CBCFCB37536D19&sort=Collection&item=The%20Vietnam%20(Indochina)%20War(s)).

⁶³³ David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, eds., *Portrait of the Enemy* (New York: Random House, 1986), 51.

⁶³⁴ "Healing the wounds of war" was a major objective of the North according to Pham Van Dong and Le Duan. Le Duan, *This Nation and Socialism Are One*, 100.

⁶³⁵ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 281. Truong Nhu Tang with David Chanoff and Doan Van Toai, *A Vietcong Memoir*, 210, 215.

⁶³⁶ "Communist Plan for a 'General Uprising,' October 4, 1972 in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 571.

⁶³⁷ Ibid. 573.

⁶³⁸ “COSVN DIRECTIVE 03/CT 73,” March 1973 in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 619. “We have the Paris Agreement as the new element in the current situation and as the new weapon with which to attack the enemy and to develop our strength. See also General Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*, 10. Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 279-281. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings*, 382.

⁶³⁹ Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 586. Bui Diem and David Chanoff, *In the Jaws of History*. Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 173.

⁶⁴⁰ Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 583. Nixon also noted that U.S. military and economic aid was critical to the survival of South Vietnam.

⁶⁴¹ Simply stated: the South needed more time to develop its military and economic potential, a situation predicated upon constant aid of the United States and its pledge to retaliate against enemy violations of the Paris Accords.

⁶⁴² Richard Nixon, *No More Vietnams*, 170. Emphasis is in the original.

⁶⁴³ Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 639.

⁶⁴⁴ Nguyen Duy Hinh, *Vietnamization and the Cease-Fire*, 191.

⁶⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁴⁶ Luu Van Loi, *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy*, 279. General Van Tien Dung, *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*, 17-18.

⁶⁴⁷ Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2, 569. Pham Van Dong made a similar claim. See Doan Van Toai, “A Lament for Vietnam,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 29, 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/032981-vietnam-mag.html> (accessed June 15, 2007).

⁶⁴⁸ John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 605.

⁶⁴⁹ Quang Thi Lam, *Twenty-Five Year Century*, 373.

⁶⁵⁰ John Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices*, 605.

⁶⁵¹ Doan Van Toai, “A Lament for Vietnam,” *New York Times Magazine*, March 29, 1981, <http://www.nytimes.com/library/world/asia/032981-vietnam-mag.html> (accessed June 15, 2007).

CHAPTER 7

¹ Prior to this time, under President John F. Kennedy in the early 1960s, the United States had committed 16,300 troops and lost 400 soldiers. The deployment to Da Nang marked a major commitment to a ground war in Vietnam and not merely an adjunct role for United States military personnel.

² Ronald Reagan, "President Ronald Reagan's News Conference of April 1982," in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984), 3. Ronald Reagan, "The Unknown Soldier of the Vietnam War" in Ryn Shane-Armstrong and Lynn Armstrong, eds., *The Vietnam War: Great Speeches in History* (Farmington Hills, M.I.: Green Haven Press, 2003), 185.

³ General William Westmoreland, "As I Saw It and Now See It: A Perspective on America's Unique Experience In Vietnam," Viet Myths Conference website, <http://www.viet-myths.net/westy.htm> (accessed January 15, 2007). Originally appeared in Feb. 1990 issue of *Vietnam* magazine. Italics are added.

⁴ George Petrie (Major, U.S. Army Special Forces Retired), "Reflections on April 30, 1975," Viet Myths Conference website, <http://www.viet-myths.net/petrie.htm> (accessed January 15, 2007).

⁵ Mark Baker, *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There* (New York: Morrow, 1981), 15-16.

⁶ For example, "The COMINTERN" in Martin McCauley, *The Russian Revolution and the Soviet State, 1917-1921. Documents* (London: the Macmillan Press, Ltd., 1975), 224.

⁷ The domino theory is the belief that the Communist takeover of one nation could lead to the conquest of contiguous countries, perhaps rapidly, with the result that these totalitarian forces could reach the United States and defeat it with a preponderance of power. Dwight Eisenhower, "President Eisenhower's New Conference, May 12, 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). "Memorandum for the President's Special Committee, 'Military Implications of the US Position on Indochina in Geneva,' 17 March 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁸ For example, Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (New York: Penguin Books, 1984).

⁹ For example, "Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina, 27 February 1950" in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years*, 7.

¹⁰ "Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina," in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years*, 6-7. John Foster Dulles, "Indochina - Views of the United States on the Eve of the Geneva Conference: Address by the Secretary of State, March 29, 1954," <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/>

avalon/intdip/indoch/inch019.htm (accessed January 25, 2007). "Remarks Made by Major General Thomas J. H. Trapnall, Jr., Former Chief of the Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG), Indochina, 3 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

¹¹ Quoted in Doris Kearns, *Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc., 1976), 263.

¹² Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 11-14.

¹³ Stanley Karnow, "The Vietnam Debacle," Salon.com., April 27, 2000, <http://archive.salon.com/news/feature/2000/4/27/revisionists/index.html> (accessed November 15, 2006).

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ W.W. Rostow, "The Case for Vietnam," *Parameters*, Winter, 1996-1997, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/96winter/rostow/htm> (accessed January 15, 2007). Also, W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York: Macmillan Company, 1972), 13. "Report by the National Security Council on the Position of the United States with Respect to Indochina," in John Clark Pratt, ed. *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years*, 6-7.

¹⁶ Ho Chi Minh, *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*, ed. Bernard Fall (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967), 9.

¹⁷ For an excellent study of Ho Chi Minh's brutal suppression and purging of the nationalist movement in Vietnam see Stephane Courtois et. al., *The Black Book on Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*, trans. Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), chapter 23.

¹⁸ Norman Podhoretz, *Why We Were in Vietnam* (New York; Simon and Schuster, 1982), 33. Podhoretz opposed that notion.

¹⁹ Harry S. Truman, "Loyalty Order," in *The Second World War and After, 1940-1949*, vol. 16 of *The Annals of America* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 446. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956), 278-290.

²⁰ For example, Robert S. McNamara, *In Retrospect: The Tragedy and Lessons of Vietnam* (New York: Times Books, 1995), 322. Norman Podhoretz, *Why We Were in Vietnam*, 33. Podhoretz refuted the notion.

²¹ "Department of State Memo, May 5, 1955," in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years*, 62.

²² Edward Geary Lansdale in John Clark Pratt, ed., *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years*, 19. Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1991), 110. Robert Thompson--the famous British counter-insurgent who helped suppress the Communist insurgency in Malaysia during the 1950s--had a similar experience. He noted in regard to Communist aggression in Vietnam: "We had found nothing new in Vietnam, except in scale and intensity." Robert Thompson, *No Exit From Vietnam* (New York: David McKay co., Inc., 1969), 133.

²³ Edward Geary Lansdale, *In the Midst of Wars*, 373-373.

²⁴ Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 52-53.

²⁵ For example, Harry S. Truman, *The Truman Program: Addresses and Messages by President Harry S. Truman* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948-1949), 18-20. President Eisenhower considered this moderation pivotal to the very nature of democracy and modern political processes in the United States. He called it the "middle way." Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate For Change: The White House Years, 1953-1956* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1963), 11. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1978), 46. "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

²⁶ Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 519. Truman pointed out a quote from Acheson: "The central problem in Indochina was the fence-sitting by the population. They would never come down on one side or another until they had a reasonable assurance of who would be the victor and that their interests would be served by the victor."

²⁷ For example, James A. Henretta, et. al., *America: A Concise History*. vol. 2 *Since 1865* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2002), 792-795.

²⁸ U.S. Congress, House Committee on Un-American Activities, House of Representatives, Eighty-sixth Congress. *Facts on Communism* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1960-1961), 94-95. Herbert A. Philbrick, *I Led Three Lives: Citizen, 'Communist,' Counterspy* (Washington, Capitol Hill Press, 1972). Whitaker Chambers, *Witness* (New York: Random House, 1952). J. Edgar Hoover, *Masters of Deceit: the Story of Communism in America and How to Fight It* (New York: Holdt, 1958). Alice Widener, *Teachers of Destruction: Their Plans for a Socialist Revolution, An Eyewitness Account* (Washington: Citizens Evaluation Institute, 1971).

²⁹ Even the *Pentagon Papers* demonstrated this point. Neil Sheehan, ed., *The Pentagon Papers: The Secret History of the Vietnam War* (New York: Bantam Books, 1971). Although in 1971 the compilers of the *Pentagon Papers* published leaked top-secret government documents on the war

in Vietnam to challenge Washington's involvement in that conflict, the documents in that very book confirm rather than refute the reason why the United States became involved: Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

³⁰ Michael Beschloss, ed., *Reaching for Glory: Lyndon Johnson's Secret White House Tapes, 1964-1965* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), 185.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 273-274.

³² Franklin, D. Roosevelt, "F.D. Roosevelt's 'The Four Freedoms' Speech, January 6, 1941," in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 9th ed. (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1973), 446-449. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy: Basic Document, 1941-1949* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1950), 1. "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³³ "The Atlantic Charter, August 14, 1941," in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 451. Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy*, 1.

³⁴ Harry S. Truman, "President Truman's Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress," April 16, 1945, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/ww2/stofunio.html> (accessed January 15, 2007).

³⁵ Harry Bonaro Overstreet, *What We Must Know About Communism* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1958), 97-102. Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 44-45. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 276, 293.

³⁶ Harry S. Truman, *The Truman Program: Addresses and Messages by President Harry S. Truman*, 60-61.

³⁷ "The Crisis of World Capitalism," in *The Burdens of World Power, 1961-1968*, vol. 18 of *The Annals of America* (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, Inc., 1968), 46-47. W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History*, 4-13. For example, "The Tehran Conference," in Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, *A Decade of American Foreign Policy*, 23. See also Winston Churchill, "The Sinews of Peace," March 5, 1946, <http://www.hpol.org/churchill/htm> (accessed February 21, 2007). "Statement by Secretary Dulles Made at Augusta, Georgia, April 19, 1954, on Conversations in London and Paris Concerning Indochina," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

³⁸ Harry S. Truman, "Address of the President of the United States: Recommendation for Assistance to Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," http://trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/doctrine/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-03-1 (accessed February 21, 2007). Harry S. Truman, "The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947," in Henry Steele

Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 526-527. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 105-106.

³⁹ “McCarran Internal Security Act, September 23, 1950” in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 554. See also “NSC 68: United States Objectives and Programs for National Security,” April 7, 1950, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/nsc-68/nsc68-1.htm> (accessed February 25, 2007). NSC 68 remains among the most criticized documents of the Cold War. In hindsight, the document proved itself to be a valuable and accurate assessment of the hostility and the objectives of the Soviet Union and international Communism.

⁴⁰ “The Recall of General Douglas MacArthur, April 11, 1951,” in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 567.

⁴¹ Harry S. Truman, “The Truman Doctrine, March 12, 1947,” in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 526-527. Contrary to public misunderstanding on the subject, Truman never believed that the Soviets gave direct orders to every Communist group or nation but rather the Soviets, he understood, had a variety of power mechanisms for manipulating these groups, from outright control to influence through aid and arms, to unity based on a common enmity of the United States. The argument against “monolithic Communism” is therefore a pointless discourse that does not address the fact that the Soviet Union during the Cold War engineered an anti-American global alliance and effort using a variety of international relations between countries that supported Moscow.

⁴² The United States created these security alliances in addition to individual security treaties with nations like Japan and the Philippines. “North Atlantic Treaty,” April 4, 1949, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/nato.htm> (accessed March 10, 2007); “Mutual Defense Treaty Between the United States and the Republic of the Philippines,” August 30, 1951, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/philippines/phil001.htm> (accessed March 15, 2007); “Security Treaty Between the United States, Australia, and New Zealand (ANZUS),” September 1, 1951, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/intdip/usmulti/usmu002.htm> (accessed March 25, 2007); “Security Treaty Between the United States and Japan,” September 8, 1951, <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/japan/japan001.htm> (accessed March 26, 2007). “U.S. Special Committee Report on Southeast Asia—Part II, 5 April 1954, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁴³ “The Crisis of World Capitalism,” in *The Burdens of World Power, 1961-1968*, vol. 18 of *The Annals of America*, 46-47. See also S. K. Padover, “Russia’s War of Words Against the United States,” *Nation*, 1 January 1949, 13-15. The Soviet position was articulated in the famous Novikov Telegram by Soviet Ambassador to Washington Nikolai Novikov. See Nikolai Novikov, “Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Telegram,” September 1946, <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/novikov.htm> (accessed March 26, 2007).

⁴⁴ France and New Zealand both pulled out of their respective alliances: the former out of NATO in 1959; the later out of ANZUS during the middle of the 1980s.

⁴⁵ Alan Brinkley, *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*, 4th edition (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 2003), 778.

⁴⁶ Ibid. 779.

⁴⁷ “Kirk Douglas on Patriotism” in *The Burdens of World Power, 1961-1968*, vol. 18 of *The Annals of America*, 381.

⁴⁸ The Communists have admitted this fact since the time of Friedrich Engels. Engels noted in a letter addressed to his associate Friedrich A. Sorge, dated December 2, 1893, that the working class of the United States failed to embrace Communism and its notions of class conflict because of the fact that these Americans prospered economically; Lewis S. Feuer, ed., *Marx and Engels: Basic Writings on Politics and Philosophy* (London: Collins Clear-Type Press, 1969), 496.

⁴⁹ In general, the history books used in public education throughout the United States underscored the patriotic values that helped make America democratic, prosperous, and free. For example, Gertrude Hartman, *America: Land of Freedom*, 2nd ed. (D.C. Heath and Company, 1955).

⁵⁰ Ronald Reagan, “Ronald Reagan Farewell Address to the Nation,” January 11, 1989 *AMDOCS: Documents for the Study of American History*, <http://www.vlib.us/amdocs/texts/reagan011989.html> (accessed April 23, 2007).

⁵¹ Harry S. Truman, *The Truman Program: Addresses and Messages by President Harry S. Truman*, 58. “Address by Secretary Dulles Delivered to the Nation over Radio and Television, May 7, 1954, The Issues at Geneva,” <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008). Secretary Dulles called these morale and ideological factors “moral forces.”

⁵² Mark Baker, *Nam: The Vietnam War in the Words of the Men and Women Who Fought There*, 26-27.

⁵³ William J. Bennett, ed., *Our Sacred Honor: Words of Advice from the Founders in Stories, Letters, Poems, and Speeches* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997), 15-21.

⁵⁴ Christian G. Appy, ed., *Patriots: The Vietnam War Remembered from All Sides*, 266. In 1965 Paul Potter, President of Students for a Democratic Society, stated in an antiwar speech in Washington, D.C. that the United States was the source of violence in Vietnam, a violence that stemmed allegedly from the characteristic brutality of American society.

⁵⁵ Ibid. 267.

⁵⁶ William J. Bennett, ed., *Our Sacred Honor*, 28-29.

⁵⁷ Andrew Carroll, ed., *War Letters: Extraordinary Correspondence from American Wars* (New York: Scribner, 2001), 719.

⁵⁸ Andrew Carroll, ed., *War Letters*, 721.

⁵⁹ "The Crisis of World Capitalism," in *The Burdens of World Power, 1961-1968*, vol. 18 of *The Annals of America*, 47. See also S. K. Padover, "Russia's War of Words Against the United States," *Nation*, 1 January 1949, 13-15. For a discussion of the same use of Communist propaganda in mainland China, see "Transfusions of Hate," *Time*, 23 June 1952, 34.

⁶⁰ "Internal Study Document by Secretary of the Lao Dong Party Committee for the South Le Duan: 'The Path of Revolution in the South,' November 1956" in Gareth Porter, ed., *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*, vol. 2 (Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979), 25. Pham Van Dong, *Selected Writings* (Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977), 25.

⁶¹ George F. Kennan, "The Sources of Soviet Conduct" July 1947 in James F. Hodge, Jr., and Fareed Zakaria, eds., *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 155-169.

⁶² Quoted in *The Burdens of World Power, 1961-1968*, Vol 18 of *The Annals of America*, 47.

⁶³ "We Will Bury You," *Time*. November 26, 1956, 24.

⁶⁴ Harry S. Truman, "Truman's Statement on Fundamentals of American Foreign Policy, October 27, 1945" in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 504. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 238-239. "Memorandum from Secretary of State Dulles on Instructions to the American Delegation at Geneva, 12 May 1954," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶⁵ In 1951, the *Department of State Bulletin* noted that the "Marshall Plan nations, in less than 4 years, have rebuilt their economies to a point that could well persuade the Kremlin that the Europe which looked like such easy pickings in 1946 and 1947 is indeed a formidable bastion today." "European Recovery Program, December 30, 1951," in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 570. Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Mandate For Change: The White House Years, 1953-1956*, 80-81. "Statement of Policy by the National Security Council on Basic National Security Policy, 30 October 1953," <http://www.mtholyoke.edu/acad/intrel/vietnam.htm> (accessed January 14, 2008).

⁶⁶ "European Recovery Program, December 30, 1951," in Henry Steele Commager, ed., *Documents of American History*, 569.

⁶⁷ Quoted in Richard Nixon, *The Real War* (New York, Warner Books, Inc., 1980), 212.

⁶⁸ Thomas Bailey, *A Diplomatic History of the American People*, 6th edition (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, Inc., 1958), 804. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 232-239.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 805.

⁷⁰ Harry Truman, "The Point Four Program," in *The Second World War and After, 1940-1949*, vol. 16 of *The Annals of America*, 596. Harry S. Truman, *Years of Trial and Hope*, 232-239.

⁷¹ Richard Nixon, *The Real War*, 212.

⁷² Ronald Reagan, *Ronald Reagan: A Man True to His Word*, ed. James S. Brady (National Federation of Republican Women, 1984), 40. See also Herbert Hoover, "The President's Economic Mission to Germany and Austria: Report No. 1: German Agricultural and Food Requirements," February 28, 1947, http://www.trumanlibrary.org/whistlestop/study_collections/marshall/large/documents/index.php?documentdate=1947-02-28&documentid=24&studycollectionid=mp&pagenumber=1 (accessed February 13, 2007). Hoover stated the same at this earlier date, noting that the United States was undertaking a new policy in world history, that of a victor helping to fund and rehabilitate the economy and well being of a conquered foe.

⁷³ Texas Tech University's Vietnam Center has an excellent online collection of oral history interviews conducted with veterans of the Vietnam War. These interviews are available at <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/oralhistory/interviews/index.htm> (accessed April 21, 2007).

⁷⁴ Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History*, 15.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Armstrong, Ryn Shane and Lynn Armstrong, eds. *The Vietnam War: Great Speeches in History*. Farmington Hills, M.I.: Green Haven Press, 2003.

Breaking Our Chains: Documents on the Vietnamese Revolution of August 1945. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1960.

Brinkley, Alan. *The Unfinished Nation: A Concise History of the American People*. New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993.

Central Intelligence Agency. "Cold War Era Hard Target Analysis of Soviet and Chinese Policy and Decision Making, 1953-1973," <http://www.foia.cia.gov/cpe.asp> (accessed August 2007). Documents released May 2007.

Chanoff, David and Doan Van Toai, eds. *Portrait of the Enemy*. New York: Random House, 86.

Christie, Clive J. *Southeast Asia in the Twentieth Century: A Reader*. New York and London: IB. Tauris and Company, Ltd., 1998.

Cooper, Chester L. *The Lost Crusade: America in Vietnam*. New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1970.

Courtois, Stephane, et. al. *The Black Book on Communism: Crimes, Terror, Repression*. translated by Jonathan Murphy and Mark Kramer. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

Chinh, Truong, *Forward Along the Path Charted By K. Marx*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1969).

Chinh, Truong, *Primer For Revolt: the Communist Takeover in Viet-Nam*. facsimile ed. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1963.

Churchill, Winston S. ed. *Never Give In! The Best of Winston Churchill's Speeches*. New York: Hyperion books, 2003.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. *Contribution to the History of Dien Bien Phu*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1965.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. *The U.S. War of Aggression in Vietnam: A Crime Against the Vietnamese People Against Peace and Humanity*. 1966.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. *Vietnam: Fundamental Problems*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1966.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. *The Beacon Banner: Short Stories About the War of Resistance in Vietnam*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1964.

Democratic Republic of Vietnam. *Independence and Peace for the Vietnamese People!* Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1966.

Denton, Jeremiah, A. *When Hell Was In Session*. New York: Reader's Digest Press, 1976.

-
- Department of State. *Department of State Bulletin*. vol. LXVIII. No. 1755. February 12, 1973.
- Diem, Bui, and David Chanoff. *In the Jaws of History*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1987.
- Do, Trinh Quang. *Saigon to San Diego: Memoir of a Boy Who Escaped from Communist Vietnam*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company, Inc., 2004.
- Dong, Pham Van. *Ho Chi Minh: A Man, A Nation, An Age, and A Cause*. Third edition. Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 1999.
- Dong, Pham Van. *Pham Van Dong: Selected Writings*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1977).
- Doyle, Edward and Samuel Lipsman. *The Vietnam Experience: Setting the Stage*. Boston: Boston Publishing Co., 1981.
- Duiker, William J. *Ho Chi Minh: A Life*. New York: Hyperion, 2000.
- Dung, General Van Tien. *Our Great Spring Victory: An Account of the Liberation of South Vietnam*. Translated John Spragens, Jr. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1977.
- Duan, Le. *This Nation and Socialism Are One: Selected Writings of Le Duan*. ed. Tran Van Dinh. Chicago: Vanguard Books, 1976.
- Duan, Le. *Some Questions Concerning The International Tasks of Our Party: Speech at the Ninth Plenum of the Third Central Committee of the Viet Nam Workers' Party*. Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1964.
- Eden, Anthony. *Toward Peace in Indochina*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966.
- Eden, Anthony. *Full Circle: The Memoirs of Anthony Eden*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1966.
- Eisenhower, Dwight D. *The White House Years: Mandate for Change, 1953-1956*. Garden City, New Jersey: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1963.
- Gettleman, Marvin, ed. *Vietnam: History, Documents, and Opinions on a Major World Crisis*. New York: Fawcett Publications, 1965.

-
- Giap, General Vo Nguyen. *The Military Art of People's War: Selected Writings of General Vo Nguyen Giap*. edited Russell Stetler. New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1970.
- Grenville, J.A.S., ed. *The Major International Treaties 1914-1973: A History and Guide with Texts*. New York: Stein and Day Publishers, 1975.
- Gunners Without Insignia*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1966.
- Hayden, Tom. *Reunion: A Memoir*. New York: Random House, 1988.
- Herr, Michael. *Dispatches*. New York: Avon Book, 1978.
- Hilsman, Roger. *To Move A Nation: The Politics of Foreign Policy in the Administration of John F. Kennedy*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1967.
- Hinh, Nguyen Duy. *Lam Son 719*. Washington: D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.
- Hinh, Nguyen Duy. *Vietnamization and Cease-Fire*. Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, 1980.
- Hodge, Jr., James F. and Fareed Zakaria, eds. *The American Encounter: The United States and the Making of the Modern World*. New York: BasicBooks, 1997.
- Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace. *Visions of Victory: Selected Vietnamese Communist Military Writings, 1964-1968*. Hoover Institution Publications, 1969.
- Hosmer, Stephen T., et al. *The Fall of South Vietnam: Statements by Vietnamese Military and Civilian Leaders*. Santa Monica: Rand, 1978.
- Hung, Nguyen Tien and Jerrold L. Schecter, *The Palace File*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers, 1986.
- The Indochinese People Will Win!* Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970.
- Karnow, Stanley. *Vietnam: A History*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.
- Khuyen, Dong Van. *The RVNAF*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.
- Kissinger, Henry A. *American Foreign Policy*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974.
- Kissinger, Henry A. *White House Years*. Boston: Little, Brown, 1979.
- Kissinger, Henry A. *Years of Upheaval*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982.

-
- Kolko, Gabriel. *Anatomy of a War: Vietnam, the United States, and the Modern Historical Experience*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985.
- Ky Nguyen Cao, and Marvin J. Wolf. *Buddha's Child: My Fight to Save Vietnam*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002.
- Lansdale, Edward Geary. *In the Midst of Wars: An American's Mission to Southeast Asia*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1991.
- LeGro, William E. *Vietnam From Cease-Fire to Capitulation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1981.
- Loi, Luu Van. *50 Years of Vietnamese Diplomacy: 1945-1995*. Hanoi: Gioi Publishers, 2000.
- Marr, David G., ed. *Reflections From Captivity*. Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1978.
- The Military History Institute of Vietnam. *Victory in Vietnam: the Official History of the People's Army of Vietnam, 1954-1975*. translated Merle L. Pribbenow. Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2002.
- Moss, George Donelson. *Vietnam: An American Ordeal*. second edition. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1994.
- Minh, Ho Chi. *Ho Chi Minh on Revolution: Selected Writings, 1920-1966*. edited Bernard Fall. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1967.
- Minh, Ho Chi. *Against U.S. Aggression For National Salvation*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1967.
- National Intelligence Council, *Estimative Products on Vietnam, 1948-1975*. Pittsburgh, PA: Government Printing Office, 2005.
- National Liberation Front, *Heroes and Heroines of the Liberation Armed Forces of South Vietnam*. South Vietnam, Liberation Editions, 1965.
- Nixon, Richard M. *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Containing the Public Messages, Speeches, and Statements of the President. Year 1969*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1971.
- Nixon, Richard M. *The Real War*. New York: Warner Books, Inc., 1980.
- Nixon, Richard M. *No More Vietnams*. New York: Arbor House, 1985.

Nixon, Richard M. *In the Arena: A Memoir of Victory, Defeat, and Renewal*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1990.

An Outline History of the Viet Nam Worker's Party, 1930-1970. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970.

Pentagon Papers. Gravel edition. Boston: Beacon Press, 1971.

Pentagon Papers. *New York Times* edition. Toronto: Bantam Books, 1970.

Pike, Douglas. *Viet Cong: The Organization and Techniques of the National Liberation Front of South Vietnam*. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1966.

Pike, Douglas, *History of the Vietnamese Communist Party*. Palo Alto: Hoover Institution, 1978.

Pipes, Richard, ed. *The Unknown Lenin: From the Secret Archives*. trans. Catherine A. Fitzpatrick. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998.

Political Programme of the South Viet Nam National Front For Liberation. Giai Phong Publishing House South Vietnam, 1967.

Porter, Gareth, ed. *Vietnam: The Definitive Documentation of Human Decisions*. Vol. 1 and Vol. 2. Stanfordville, New York: Earl M. Coleman Enterprises, Inc., Publishers, 1979.

Pratt, John Clark., ed. *Vietnam Voices: Perspectives on the War Years, 1941-1982*. New York: Penguin Books, 1984.

The Quang 1205 Document, <http://www.ojc.org/powforum/1205doc.htm> (accessed 15 August 2007).

Republic of Vietnam, *Peace and Beyond: Official Statements and Communiques on Peace and Postwar Development, July-September 1968*. Viet-Nam Documents Series IV.

Santoli, Al, ed. *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and Its Aftermath In the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians*. New York: E. P. Dutton, Inc., 1985.

Schlesinger, Arthur, Jr. *A Thousand Days: John F. Kennedy in the White House*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965.

Schlesinger Jr., Arthur., ed. *The Dynamics of World Power: A Documentary History of United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1973*. Vol. IV. *The Far East*. New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1973.

Snepp, Frank. *Decent Interval*. New York: Random House, 1977.

-
- Son, Truong. *A Bitter Dry Season For the Americans*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House Press, 1966.
- Sorley, Lewis, ed. *Vietnam Chronicles: The Abrams Tapes, 1968-1972*. Texas Tech University Press, 2004.
- South Vietnam Committee for Denunciation of the Crimes of the U.S. Imperialists and their Henchmen, *U.S. Imperialists' 'Burn All, Destroy All, Kill All' Policy in South Vietnam*. South Vietnam: Giai Phong Editions, 1967.
- Sutsakhan, Sak. *The Khmer Republic at War and the Final Collapse*. Washington, D.C.: Indochina Monograph, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.
- Tan, General Chu Van. *Reminiscences on the Army for National Salvation: Memoir of General Chu Van Tan*. trans. Mai Elliott. Ithaca, New York: Cornell University, 1974.
- Tang, Truong Nhu, David Chanoff, and Doan Van Toai. *A Vietcong Memoir*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich Publishers, 1985.
- Thai, Lt. General Hoang Van. *Some Aspects of Guerrilla Warfare in Vietnam*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1965.
- Thi, Lam Quang. *Twenty-Five Year Century: A South Vietnamese General Remembers the Indochina War to the Fall of Saigon*. Denton, Texas: University of North Texas Press, 2001.
- The Third Congress of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party*. Progress Publishers, 1984.
- Tho, Tranh Dinh. *The Cambodian Incursion*. Washington, D.C.: Indochina Monograph, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979.
- Tho, Tranh Dinh. *Pacification*. Washington, D.C.: Indochina Monograph, U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1979.
- Thompson, Robert. *No Exit From Vietnam*. New York: Mckay, 1970.
- Trager, Frank N. *Why Viet Nam*. New York: Frederick A. Praeger, Publishers, 1966.
- Truman, Harry S. *Years of Trial and Hope*. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1956.
- Truman, Harry S. *The Truman Program: Addresses and Messages by President Harry S. Truman*. Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1948-1949.

Truong, Ngo Quang. *Easter Offensive of 1972*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.

United States, Department of State. *Foreign Relations of the United States (FRUS series)*. Recent editions include *FRUS*, Vol. VI, *Vietnam, January 1969-July 1970*; Vol. XII. *Soviet Union, January 1969 to October 1970*; Vol. XIV. *Soviet Union, October 1971 to May 1972*; Vol. XVI. *China, 1969-1972*; Vol. XX. *Southeast Asia, 1969-1972*. Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 2006.

U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam. Office of Assistant Chief of Staff-J-2. Combined Intelligence Center Vietnam. Study 67-037: Strategy Since 1954. 29 June 1967. Headquarters Armed Forces of R.V.N. Office of Joint General Staff-J -2.

Vien, Cao Van, and Dong Van Khuyen. *Reflections of the Vietnam War*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980.

Vien, Nguyen Khac, ed. *South Viet Nam: From the NFL to the Provisional Revolutionary Government*.

Vien, Nguyen Khac, ed. *Mountain Regions and National Minorities*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, n.d.

Vien, Nguyen Khac, ed. *Traditional Viet-Nam: Some Historical Stages*. Hanoi: DRV, n.d.

Vien, Nguyen Khac ed. *A Century of National Struggle (1847-1945)*. Hanoi: 1970.

Vien, Nguyen Khac, ed. *Glimpses of U.S. Neo-Colonialism: Neo-Colonialism and Global Strategy*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1970.

Vien, Nguyen Khac ed., *Viet Nam, Laos, Cambodia, 1969-1970*. Hanoi: Xunhasaba, 1970.

Vien, General Cao Van, and Lt. Gen. Dong Van Khuyen. *Reflections on the Vietnam War*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1980.

Vietnam Workers Party. *Our President Ho Chi Minh*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1970.

Vinh, Lieutenant General Nguyen Van. *The Vietnamese People on the Road to Victory*. Hanoi: Foreign Language Publishing House, 1966.

Vongsavanh, Brig. Gen. Solitchay. *RLG Military Operations and Activities in the Laotian Panhandle*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Army Center of Military History, 1981.

Westmoreland, William C. *A Soldier Reports*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976.

Weyand, General Fred C. "Vietnam Assessment Report, April 4, 1975, "<http://www.ford.utexas.edu/library/exhibits/vietnam/750404a.htm> (accessed 13 August 2007).